dissent

$4.00/Fall 1985

MICHAEL HARRINGTON & MARK LEVINSON
Are We Two Nations? The Perils of a Dual Economy

IRVING HOWE
Thinking About Socialism

DAVID BRODY
The CIO After 50 Years

ELLIOTT CURRIE
Crime: What the Conservatives Don't See

ROBERT HEILBRONER
The State and Capitalism

WILLIAM ADAMS
Woody Allen: Illusion and Reality

HENDRIK HERTZBERG
The Vietnam Hangover

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AMONG OUR CONTRIBUTORS

WILLIAM ADAMS teaches in the Western Culture Program at Stanford University.

FRED BLOCK, who teaches sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, writes on political economy and is an editor of *Politics & Society.*

DAVID BRODY, author of *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the 20th-Century Struggle* and other books on American labor history, teaches American history at the University of California, Davis.

ELLIOTT CURRIE is currently a research associate at the Center for Study of Law and Society, University of California, Berkeley. He has recently been a consultant to the National Advisory Council on Economic Opportunity and to the California Governor's Task Force on Civil Rights.

ANN DOUGLAS is associated with the Center for American Cultural Studies, Columbia University. She is at work on a book on Freudian theory and contemporary mass culture.

HENDRIK HERTZBERG, editor of the *New Republic* 1981–85, is a fellow of the Institute of Politics, Harvard University. His article is adapted from a talk to a conference on "The 1960s and the Future of American Politics" at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

MONA R. HOCHBERG is a Boston-based free-lance writer, specializing in labor and community issues.

JOHN HOLDREN is a graduate student of American literature at the University of Virginia.

ROBERT D. HOLSWORTH teaches American politics and political theory at Virginia Commonwealth University. He is the author of *Public Interest Liberalism and the Crisis of Affluence* and co-author, with J. Harry Wray, of *American Politics and Everyday Life.*

HARRY KAHN has been a partner of Neuberger & Berman for over 20 years. Earlier, he served in various government agencies.

ZUZANA KOHÁKOVÁ is a psychologist and free-lance writer, with a special interest in Slavic history and literature.

RICHARD LOWENTHAL is a professor emeritus of International Relations at the Free University of Berlin. An active German Social Democrat since the years of resistance against Hitler, he now is a member both of the SPD's Commission on Basic Values and of its recently formed Program Commission.

KEITH MELVILLE is vice-president of the Public Agenda Foundation and editor-in-chief of the National Issues Forum.

HAROLD MEYERSON is a Los Angeles-based political consultant and commentator who writes about labor and politics for a range of publications. He is a member of DSA's National Executive Committee.

GEORGE PACKER served in the Peace Corps after graduating from Yale in 1982. He now supports himself doing carpentry, writes fiction and essays, and is finishing a book on his Peace Corps experiences in West Africa.

JOSHUA RUBENSTEIN, Northeast regional director of Amnesty International USA and author of *Soviet Dissidents: Their Struggle for Human Rights*, is at work on a biography of Ilya Ehrenburg.

MICHAEL RUSTIN teaches sociology at Northeast London Polytechnic. During the past academic year, he was a visiting member of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton.

CARMEN SIRIANNI teaches sociology at Northeastern University, Boston, and is the author of *Workers' Control and Socialist Democracy: The Soviet Experience.* This academic year he will be at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, finishing a new book on *Time, Work, and Equality.* □

DISSENT (ISSN 0012-3846), issued October 1, 1985, is published quarterly, winter, spring, summer, and fall, by the Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas, Inc., 521 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. Subscriptions: $15.00 for one year; $27.00 for two years; $10.00 for students for one year; foreign subscriptions, including Canada, add $4.00 for mailing costs per year; institutional rate $21.00 per year, $37.00 for two years, single copy $4.00. All payments from foreign countries must be made by United States money orders or checks payable in United States currency. Single copy, $4.00. For special rates on bulk orders from organizations, teachers, etc., write directly to DISSENT. For information on newsstand and bookstore distribution write to: Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 1130 Cleveland Road, Sandusky, Ohio 44870.

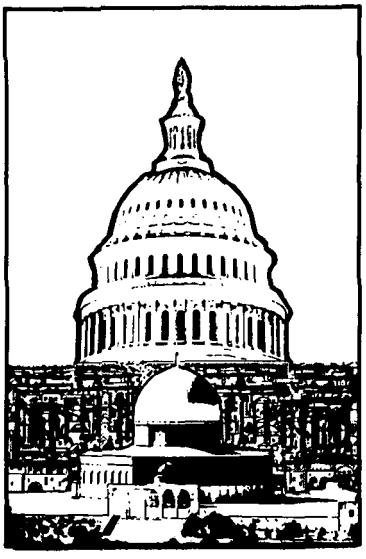
© 1985 by the Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas, Inc. (FSISI). Permission to reprint any article must be obtained from the publishers. • Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. • Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. • Volume 32, Number 4 (whole No. 141).

• DISSENT does not engage in lobbying or support candidates or legislation.

Front Cover Design by Robert Schwartz.

DISSENT is indexed in the *PAIS Bulletin.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict

Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan

Steven L. Spiegel

"A masterly and incisive book that should be valuable for experts and laymen alike." — Amos Perlmutter, *Wall Street Journal*

"A fascinating story, packed with unfamiliar information and studded with sharp insights." — Nadav Safran, *New York Times Book Review*

Cloth $24.95 520 pages

American Diplomacy

Expanded Edition

George F. Kennan

Kennan offers a plain-spoken appraisal of United States foreign policy that cuts to the heart of issues much debated today. This expanded edition includes a new preface by the author as well as two lectures delivered in 1984.

Paper $5.95 192 pages
Library cloth edition $15.00

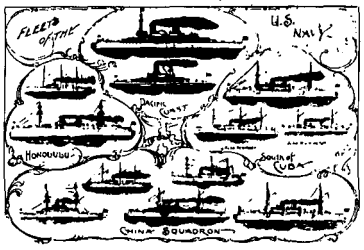
The Eagle and the Small Birds

Crisis in the Soviet Empire: From Yalta to Solidarity

Michael Charlton

Milovan Djilas compares the Soviet Union to the Ottoman Empire. Arkady Shevchenko gives insights into the mind of Gromyko. Zbigniew Brzezinski calls for a broad Western initiative to undo the legacy of Yalta. In this superb oral history, these and other diplomats, party officials, and intellectuals bear witness to how the Soviet Empire was built and how it may yet founder.

Cloth $14.95 192 pages
31 b&w photographs



Twelve Against Empire

The Anti-Imperialists, 1898–1900
With a new Preface

Robert L. Beisner

Beisner explores the emotional and intellectual wellsprings of the American anti-imperialist movement. He concentrates on the leaders of the protest against the Spanish American War, among them: William James, Charles Eliot Norton, Andrew Carnegie, and Benjamin Harrison.

Paper $9.95 324 pages

The University of CHICAGO Press

5801 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LIBERALISM

ITS PRESENT CONDITION

Friday, November 1, 6 p.m.

Liberalism in the American Experience:
Varieties of Belief

ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, JR.
THEDA SKOCPOL
GUS TYLER

Saturday, November 2, 9 a.m.

Liberalism and Race:
What Has Been Achieved and What Hasn't

CHARLES HAMILTON
RANDALL KENNEDY

Saturday, November 2, 2 p.m.

A Future for American Liberalism?

ROBERT KUTTNER
with comments by RUTH MESSINGER and ROBERT LEKACHMAN

at the

The New School
for Social Research
Graduate Faculty

65 Fifth Avenue (14th St.)
New York City

A conference sponsored by The Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas (FSISI) and *Dissent*. **(Admission Free)**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dissent

FALL 1985

EDITORS:
Irving Howe
Michael Walzer

EXECUTIVE EDITOR:
Emanuel Geltman

BOOK-REVIEW EDITOR:
Luther Carpenter

MANAGING EDITOR:
Edith H. Tarcov

BUSINESS MANAGER:
Simone Plastrik

EDITORIAL BOARD:
Bernard Avishai
David Bensman
Marshall Berman
H. Brand
David Bromwich
Joseph Buttinger
Joseph Clark
Jean L. Cohen
Mitchell Cohen
Lewis Coser
Rose Laub Coser
Bogdan Denitch
George Eckstein
Cynthia Fuchs Epstein
Michael Harrington
Murray Hausknecht
Robert Heilbroner
Erazim Kohák
William Kornblum
Jeremy Larner
Robert Lekachman
Mark Levinson
Norman Mailer
Deborah Meier
Nicolaus Mills
Carol O'Cleireacain
Martin Peretz
Jack Rader
Ronald Radosh
Bernard Rosenberg
James Rule
Fred Siegel
Meyer Schapiro
Brendan Sexton
Patricia Cayo Sexton
Ronnie Steinberg
Peter Steinfels
Dennis Wrong

COMMENTS AND OPINIONS

389
COMMENTS by Murray Hausknecht . . . David Bensman . . . Mona R. Hochberg
Mark Levinson . . . David Bromwich . . . Hendrik Hertzberg
Irving Howe & Michael Walzer . . . Erazim Kohák . . . George Packer

ARTICLES

417
THE PERILS OF A DUAL ECONOMY
by Michael Harrington & Mark Levinson

427
CRIME AND THE CONSERVATIVES *by Elliott Currie*

438
THE STATE AND CAPITALISM *by Robert Heilbroner*

443
WHAT LABOUR DID IN OFFICE: AN EXCLUSIVE REPORT ON BRITAIN'S 1988 ELECTION *by Michael Rustin*

451
A SEARCH FOR SOCIALISM: AN OLD FRIEND LOOKS AT HENRY PACHTER'S WRITINGS *by Richard Lowenthal*

457
THE CIO AFTER 50 YEARS
A HISTORICAL RECKONING *by David Brody*
an INTERVIEW WITH PHILLIP VAN GELDER *by Mark Levinson* & Brian Morton . . . and an INTERVIEW WITH GENORA JOHNSON *by Harold Meyerson*

473
EQUALITY AND THE DIVISION OF LABOR *by Carmen Sirianni*

NOTEBOOK

479
CORPORATE MERGER MADNESS *by Harry Kahn & Keith Melville*
VENGEANCE FOR THE JEWISH VICTORY *by Hersh Smolar*
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN AND NARRATIVE ROCK *by Ann Douglas*

MOVIES

490
WOODY ALLEN: ILLUSION & REALITY *by William Adams*

BOOKS

493
REVIEWS by Joshua Rubenstein . . . Fred Block . . . Zuzana Kohákova
John Holdren . . . Emanuel Geltman . . . Robert D. Holsworth

SPECIAL FEATURE

509
THINKING ABOUT SOCIALISM *by Irving Howe*

LETTERS

526

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IRVING HOWE
SOCIALISM AND AMERICA

In these thoughtful, lucid, and engagingly written essays, esteemed literary critic Irving Howe surveys a movement he has known firsthand since the thirties and reflects on its past, present, and future in America.

"Howe's great gift as a critic is for lucid and readable exposition of ideas enlivened by flashes of wit and eloquence."
—Washington Post Book World

"Over the years, Howe's judgment on the serious moral questions has been exemplary." *—Village Voice*

HBJ *Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers*

1250 SIXTH AVENUE • SAN DIEGO, CA 92101

Available at bookstores in late October

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Murray Hausknecht

Crime and the Culture of Business

Earlier this year the morality of American business again became a hot public issue as one scandal after another hit the headlines. "Old-line manufacturers exposed cheating the Pentagon. Venerable banks caught laundering money. A securities firm found fraudulently kiting checks. Once respected businessmen and former government officials indicted—and jailed—for insider trading and fraud." (*New York Times*, June 9, 1985.)

For explanations, the usual suspects were rounded up. Some believed it was symptomatic of a "breakdown in morals throughout society." Caspar Weinberger said of contractors accused of overcharging the Pentagon, "I don't think a few bad apples should cause you to judge the whole barrel." The obverse side of the bad-apple theory was contributed by the head of the Securities and Exchange Commission's law enforcement division, who maintained (as the *Times* reported, June 9, 1985) that there is "little difference in the motivations of white-collar criminals and street thugs . . . people guilty of insider trading 'are motivated by greed and the belief they aren't going to get caught.' "

The term "white-collar crime" first appeared among professional sociologists, but a significant dimension of meaning was lost in the translation to the vocabulary of popular culture. It does *not* simply mean crime committed by middle-class people; rather, in Edwin Sutherland's classic definition, it is "a crime committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of his occupation." (*White Collar Crime*, New York: Dryden, 1949.) He called white-collar crimes "the crimes of corporations," which are not "inadvertent violations of technical regulations." They are deliberate and have "a relatively consistent unity" that exemplifies "the special culture of the business world." This type of crime benefits from "the increased rationality" of the modern corporate structure. In short, the sources of white-collar crime lie in the culture of capitalist business as an institution—a point obscured in popular usage.

• Consider the case of Paul Thayer, formerly the second highest Defense Department official, who as head of a major Pentagon supplier gave his girlfriend and his broker inside information enabling them to clear tidy sums on the stock exchange. This is not a "corporate crime" arising from "the special culture of the business world." It has more in common with a mugging than with anything else. More than pedantry is involved here, since the major law-enforcement emphasis of the Reagan-dominated SEC is precisely on insider trading for probably the same reasons cops must be concerned with street crime. The latter is a persistent evil in the everyday life of citizens, and insider trading is the street crime of the financial district. On the floor of the stock exchange, information is power—those with inside information increase the risks of others in an already highly uncertain situation.

Just as the focus on street crime distracts attention and resources from the more far-reaching consequences of organized crime and white-collar crime itself, so concentrating on insider trading fails to protect us from the corporate depredations of General Electric, General Dynamics, and E. F. Hutton. On the other hand, going after street crime, whether in the form of mugging or insider trading, gives everyone a comforting sense that "something is being done."

To focus on greed plain and simple as a motive

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for white-collar crime is misleading. Greed is one of the seven deadly sins, a result of man's fallen nature, and so white-collar crime is seen as representing the moral failings of individuals. To be sure, greed is at work, but it is useful to see it as analogous to racial prejudice. Racial discrimination is not the result of prejudice alone; that is, the core of the problem contains institutionalized racism, the negative beliefs, attitudes, and behavior embedded in the culture of the society. Similarly, the greed we must attend to is not the individual's sin of greed but the institutionalized greed of a capitalist economy.

• E. F. Hutton is a case in point. As in any good capitalist enterprise its objective is maximum profits, and local branch managers were urged to be "creative" in the use of the cash on hand at the end of each business day. In response to this pressure, the managers evolved a check-kiting scheme that enabled them to overdraw bank accounts and cover the checks only after the withdrawn funds were used for overnight investments—in effect, as an interest-free loan. The sin of greed is irrelevant here, since the imperative of a business culture—Thou Shalt Maximize Profits—pushed the company and individual managers toward criminal behavior.

The scheme depended on some fine timing in the writing of checks and of making deposits that was made possible by the coordination built into the structure of modern business organizations. That is, Hutton is a highly rationalized economic organization staffed by trained people whose actions are systematically ordered and coordinated. They competently used the firm's resources to meet its policy objectives, and they were able to spot, and take advantage of, the deficiencies in the banking system. E. F. Hutton was late capitalism's reincarnation of Willie Sutton: both knew that banks are where the money is, but the independent, skilled artisan has long since given way to the highly rationalized and technologically advanced late-capitalist enterprise.

Even in the world of professional crime the Willie Suttons are a dying breed; the greatest opportunities lie in *organized* crime. Like business, its actions are rationally coordinated, its personnel is supervised, and its markets are allocated. Neither organized crime nor legal businesses can afford to stuff the gains into a mattress; both must use profits to generate more profits. In the case of organized crime that requires laundering, and the sheer amount of cash involved makes it a profitable opportunity for banks. In Boston the banks laundered about $1.3 billion. The amount is important, since the risks of dealing with criminals and violating the law must be calculated relative to anticipated returns: the higher the anticipated profit, the greater the likelihood that a bank will avoid defining a client as a criminal.

THE CALCULATION OF RISK is, of course, not limited to business organizations, since it is also a hallmark of professional criminals. They all take into account the probabilities of being caught and the severity of punishment relative to gains. Rationality, however, can be adversely affected by nonrational elements; contempt for the victim, for example, can affect objectivity. Large defense contractors like General Electric and General Dynamics are run by businessmen who see "Washington" and "the bureaucracy" not only as incompetent but as fundamentally hostile to business. Such attitudes undermine prudent conduct and are further bolstered these days by the Reaganite zeitgeist that defines the interests of businessmen as the lodestar for public policy.

Conventional criminal enterprises frequently benefit from incompetent or corrupt law enforcement. In the military-industrial complex, business benefits from lax enforcement. Most high-level positions in the Defense Department are held by businessmen who will be returning to positions in business, and they are not likely to cry *caveat emptor!* in the presence of their once and future colleagues. Nor will many military procurement officers heed the warning if given, since a common second career for them is a job in the defense industries. And even if someone is caught, the penalties imposed—if prosecution takes place—do not function as serious deterrents. Cutting ethical corners and overstepping the bounds of legality, then, become institutionalized practices in the defense industries because the metaphorical cop on the corner is predisposed to view businessmen as benign, upright citizens.

The favorable definition of business pervades the entire society, and it results in a military procurement system that permits large, legal profits. The structure of the system is also used to justify misconduct. Lester Crown, a major stockholder and director of General Dynamics, interviewed by the *Times*, "was insistent that the company was a victim of an imperfect procurement system" (June 16, 1985). Here, at least, institutionalized greed and street crime overlap. Muggers, Robert Lejeune reports, often use force after a victim does not succumb to their threats of violence. "From their perspective . . . force is the inevitable outcome of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the victim's failure to accede to the seemingly self-evident social calculus of the situation" ("The Management of Mugging," *Urban Life*, July 1977). "Blaming the victim," evidently, is not limited to the subculture of muggers.

The favorite tie of Attorney-General Edwin Meese has the name of Adam Smith prominently displayed in its design, the same Adam Smith who 200 years ago warned, "People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment or diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public. . . ." □

David Bensman

The Unions Try Self-Criticism

The American labor movement is being battered by tides of change. Union membership as a proportion of the total work force is down; relative wages are declining; hard-won work rules are being surrendered; and employers are sowing the seeds of future discord by insisting on two-tier wage scales.

Labor lobbyists can't get their full-employment economic program on the congressional agenda; labor's candidate Walter Mondale abandoned the AFL–CIO's industrial policy; and Mondale's chief opponent, Gary Hart, made union-bashing a feature of his primary campaign. Little wonder that the Reagan National Labor Relations Board feels free to overturn half a century of collective-bargaining practice.

Matters are even worse on the economic front. Large corporations have gained the ability to shift their production facilities to low-wage, nonunion areas; the strong dollar has priced the output of unionized Americans right out of international markets; subsidized imports are wiping out whole domestic industries; and two decades of slow economic growth have created a pool of unemployed workers, young and old, ready to work as strike-breakers.

Labor's responses have been quite diverse. Some unions seek to merge; some seek new, "cooperative relations" with employers; some are reverting to the militant, fighting style of the 1930s. There have been inspiring stories of new labor tactics, such as the UE's mobilization of community support at Morse Cutting Tool in New Bedford, the Machinists' hardball bargaining with Eastern Airlines, and the Steelworkers' development of regional reindustrialization plans in the Monongahela Valley. There have also been depressing examples of labor disunity and ineptitude, like the PATCO fiasco, and the TWU defeat by Greyhound.

One hopeful sign is a recent report issued by the AFL–CIO, written by its staff and entitled *The Changing Situation of Workers and Their Unions: A Report by the AFL–CIO Committee on the Evolution of Work* (Washington, D.C.: AFL–CIO, February 1985)—extraordinary both for the way it forthrightly faces up to labor's many problems and for the fact that it incorporates the research and suggestions of 19 scholars, who served as consultants to the committee and are listed in the report. Furthermore, the report recommends to trade unionists a good number of changes in how they customarily function—and does so in a way that leaves open the possibility that other new methods may prove beneficial.

The document's overall impact is to encourage self-criticism and experimentation. For a movement that has long been supersensitive to criticism from "outsiders" and unyielding in its insistence that its tried and true methods were fully adequate to the task, the report's publication seems more

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than a breath of fresh air—more like a promise, a current of reform.

THE REPORT BEGINS by summarizing recent losses in union strength and worker living standards but then it goes deeper, acknowledging that right-wing and corporate attacks have succeeded in branding the labor movement with an unattractive, undemocratic image. "Nonunion workers do not perceive unions as pursuing an institutional agenda drawn from the needs and desires of their members. Sixty-five percent of such workers express agreement with the statement that 'unions force members to go along with decisions they don't like.' " This is strong stuff—not at all what the AFL–CIO published during the Meany years.

Having established that labor faces new and serious problems, the report suggests an interesting variety of remedies. It calls on unions to cultivate intensively a positive public image and urges renewed efforts to educate activists. Then, above all, it counsels labor leaders to listen closely to the needs and aspirations of the unorganized, so as to respond to their interest in such matters as pay equity, health, and safety.

Practical suggestions include mobilizing retirees, maintaining contact with former members who have moved on to other jobs, and even providing insurance benefits and other services to workers not yet ready to join a union. These flights from orthodoxy must inevitably challenge local union leaders to ask whether their traditional methods can be improved upon.

THIS IS ALL TO THE GOOD, and probably better than most observers of the Federation expected. Nevertheless, it must be stated that for all its virtues, the report stops short of getting to the roots of labor's problems. Unions today face not simply a need to develop new *techniques* for dealing with traditional challenges—but an entirely new economic environment wherein labor's accustomed strategies must be transformed.

The rapid and profound internationalization of capitalist enterprises in the past 20 years, made possible by innumerable technological advances, necessitates that American labor do two things it never had to do before: (1) coordinate effectively with trade unionists all over the world so that corporations cannot play off one nation's workers against another's; (2) gain a leading role in the formulation of our nation's trade, monetary, fiscal, regulatory, and industrial policies.

Accomplishing either of these tasks requires enormous effort; achieving both is a daunting challenge. Labor has justifiably insisted on its right to be protected from unfair international competition. Now, the task of also convincing the members that they share important interests with workers in Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, and Europe will be more than difficult. And achieving it will be impossible—unless American economic policy is completely redirected, so that fair-trade patterns are established, international monetary stability is set up, and the explosive and growing foreign-debt bomb is defused.

LABOR WILL NOT be able to play a leading role in solving these problems unless it educates and mobilizes its membership to an extent not yet attempted. And herein lies the crux of the problem. From the 1940s to the 1960s, when the labor movement made its real breakthrough in improving the living standards of working people, the adversarial but semicooperative relationship it developed with corporate America did not require the permanent mobilization of labor's rank and file. Long-term contracts and well-developed grievance procedures leading to arbitration meant that most unions could function much like a business, collecting dues through a check-off system, and delivering services for which all too often the company received credit.

Only a thin cadre of activists identified with the union and carried out its business. Thus, centralized union bureaucracies developed and, inevitably, they discouraged participation by the vast majority of the membership. That bureaucratic system of functioning developed a life of its own, and it lives on still—now that labor's urgent challenge requires an entirely different mode of operation.

The AFL–CIO report on *The Changing Situation of Workers and Their Unions* has little to say about the changing international economic patterns and the new political environment, and even less about the way these challenges necessitate the transformation of labor's strategy and mode of

Walter Goldwater
1907 – 1985

Old Comrade,
Enduring Friend

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

functioning. Perhaps that is only to be expected. The report is a significant first step in the transformation of the American labor movement; up ahead, there's a long road beckoning. And how much action will be taken in response to this report remains to be seen. Still: it's good. □

Mona R. Hochberg

The UAW Tackles Harvard

When clerical workers reached a labor agreement with Yale University last winter, the reverberations were felt throughout the country. After a 10-week strike, the 2,500 workers, most of them women, had won substantial wage and benefit improvements. At a time when the labor movement is on the defensive, this alone was enough to make front-page news. But the real significance of Yale lay in what it may portend for labor's future. If the labor movement is to survive, it must reach out to women and to office and university workers. The strike at Yale proved that female clerical workers can show the same solidarity as workers in the blue-collar trades that have traditionally been seen as labor's domain.

At Harvard University, a campaign to win union representation has been under way for more than 10 years. It was begun in 1974 by the employees of the Harvard Medical Area (the Medical School, the School of Public Health, and the School of Dentistry). After two elections—held in 1977 and 1981—in which the union was narrowly defeated, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled the proposed bargaining unit invalid, declaring that all of Harvard's clerical and technical workers must vote in any representation election. The campaign has now spread out from the Medical Area to involve all 4,000 of Harvard's clerical and technical employees.

Early Organizing Efforts

In the early '70s, women employed in the Harvard Medical Area met regularly to talk about their jobs. Realizing that they were underpaid, they decided to approach the university for a discussion of wage levels. Harvard management was unresponsive.

After considering which union would best suit their purposes, the workers decided to go with District 65 of the United Auto Workers. Flyers were sent to clerical and technical staff throughout the Medical Area. At that point, including the rest of the university in the campaign was not seriously considered. The Medical Area is located across the river from the Cambridge campus and was seen as a separate and more cohesive branch.

Harvard management did not stand by passively. According to Kris Rondeau, a former Medical Area technician who now heads the UAW organizing campaign, upper management fed misinformation to professors and administrators about how a union would affect budgets and labor relations. "Faculty were told that wage increases would come out of department budgets," she says. "There were Nobel Prize winners telling their technicians and secretaries that joining the union meant the Department wouldn't be able to afford equipment and conduct experiments."

Then there was the "paternalistic" antiunion rhetoric. Rondeau recounts management's line: "We're so sorry, we didn't know you were upset with your job. When the union is voted down and the organizing stops, we'll improve wages and benefits." Workers received lectures and written materials on why District 65 was not "the proper union." Harvard claimed that District 65 had not been able to increase benefits at other workplaces and implied that the union was on shaky financial ground and desperate for dues-paying members.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Harvard's tactics were successful. In an election held in 1977, the union was defeated 44–56 percent. Maureen Lennon, now an active union supporter at the Graduate School of Education, voted against the union when she worked at the Medical School in the late '70s:

> I just didn't think District 65 had the experience, and money, to sit down with Harvard and negotiate a good contract. They didn't represent any other university workers at that time. Harvard workers definitely needed a union, but I felt it was better to remain without a union than vote in a weak one that couldn't deal with the slickness of Harvard.*

Kris Rondeau feels that the office tension that often accompanies union organizing can be responsible for workers casting antiunion votes: "A person may like the idea of a union," she says, "but when the work atmosphere becomes charged with tension, the worker may vote the union out just so the office calms down."

The prounion workers were not deterred by the election results and organized for a second election. The prounion voting of 44 percent of the workers, despite Harvard's continuous antiunion activity, was not a disappointing figure. The campaign pointed out that before the first election Harvard had increased the employer-paid percentage of health insurance and instituted a tuition assistance plan. If Harvard increased those benefits in response to a union drive, just think what the union could negotiate once it was recognized.

Harvard then published a 35-page "fact" booklet on District 65. Rondeau claims it was purposely made to resemble an official publication of the NLRB. Unless one read the very fine print, it wouldn't be evident that the booklet was published by Harvard. Harvard's upper-echelon people involved themselves personally in this campaign. Daniel Steiner, the university's general counsel, was at the Medical Area daily, meeting with workers in groups and on a one-to-one basis, explaining the "inappropriateness" of having District 65 at Harvard.

Throughout the years of organizing, Harvard had appealed to the NLRB in attempts to thwart the campaigning. First the university challenged the suitability of having certain occupations in the union-bargaining unit. The NLRB had decided that the disputed workers could vote in the 1977 election and that the question of whether they could remain in the unit would be decided afterward. When the second, 1981 campaign started, the unchallenged members voted to remove the contested workers from the bargaining unit, eliminating an opportunity for another Harvard appeal to the NLRB, and hoping that these workers would organize their own union local.

The last days before the April 1981 election saw tension rise and cost the union last-minute votes. The final vote was 47–53 percent, and 31 swing votes out of 850 had gone the wrong way. Harvard also tried repeatedly to have the bargaining unit declared invalid because it was confined to the Medical Area. Before both the '77 and '81 elections, the NLRB sided with District 65. But in April 1984 the NLRB overturned its former decisions—following the antilabor call of the Reagan administration.

The day after the negative '84 NLRB decision, the union sent letters to all eligible employees stating that union organizing would expand onto the Cambridge campus. But the decision to continue the campaign was debated for weeks after that among the union organizers and active workers. Many people were feeling drained and uncertain of what awaited them on the Cambridge campus. Others felt that the last election had been lost by such a small margin, it made sense to try again. Many of the Medical Area workers were unwilling to give up, and Cambridge campus workers were coming forward and announcing their willingness to organize.

Current Concerns

THERE ARE NOW 4,000 workers in 440 buildings in over 250 different job descriptions to be organized. To facilitate organizing such a large group, the union affiliation was switched from District 65 to an independent UAW local. Current organizing is centered around the following issues:

(1) *Wages.* Harvard has an endowment of $2.3 billion. But this doesn't help the workers, whose UAW slogan is "We Can't Eat Prestige." Raises are minimal and supposedly based on annual reviews. "The reviews don't really serve to give adequate raises," said one secretary, "because even an excellent review will get you only a small raise. It serves, rather, as a means of control. You know your review is coming up so you're on better behavior."

As in the Yale union, the issue of comparable worth is intrinsically linked to the issue of wage levels. Workers are not simply concerned with their wages: they are interested in the basic societal

* District 65 now represents the clerical workers at Columbia University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unfairness that tracks men and women with similar educational levels into different job paths; with the jobs held primarily by women paying considerably less money. Now 82 percent of Harvard's bargaining-unit members are women.

(2) *Benefits.* Workers want a 100 percent medical-dental plan for themselves and their families. Currently, Harvard pays approximately 50 percent for the workers' and their dependents' health insurance. There is no dental plan. As for the current pension plan, Rondeau says, "It should be illegal and is immoral. Harvard looks at the employee's last five years of salary, figures what he or she needs to live as a retiree, *deducts* what Social Security provides, and pays the rest."

(3) *Job Descriptions.* Workers complain of being hired on deceptive job descriptions. The description may say that a secretary is to work for two full-time and three quarter-time professors. But quarter-time professors can generate full-time work. "It only takes five minutes," says Maureen Lennon, secretary at the Graduate School of Education, "for a professor to come up in the elevator, drop 100 pages of typing on my desk, and go back down again."

Workers realize that the union will not be able to remove all unpleasant tasks from their jobs, but as Norma Diala, a staff assistant at the Graduate School of Education, says, "At least we'll get paid for it."

Mark Levinson

A Toad for Breakfast

Zola once explained how to cope with times like these. One must buy a toad every morning and devour it alive and whole. Only after such a breakfast can one face the newspapers with a tranquil stomach, read and swallow the squalid contents, and withstand what would make normal people sick.

The latest news, best read after a breakfast of toad, is that on March 31, 1985 the Federal Supplemental Compensation (FSC) program expired. FSC provided 8 to 14 weeks of benefits to jobless workers who have exhausted state-funded unemployment benefits (which usually run 26 weeks). When FSC expired, some 325,000 unemployed workers who were receiving unemployment benefits—all of whom had been out of work for more than half a year and were still looking for a job—*immediately lost their assistance*. An additional 3.2 million jobless workers, who are now in the first 26 weeks of unemployment and are receiving state-funded unemployment benefits, will be affected as well. Until now, these workers would have been protected for another 8–14 weeks if they failed to find a job by the time the 26 weeks of state benefits were up.

This occurs at a time when long-term unemployment remains at high levels. Labor Department data show that there are now 1.3 million long-term unemployed (those out of work more than half a year and still looking for a job). More than 5.6 million officially counted unemployed people are without benefits.

This occurrs at a time when only 34 percent of the unemployed were receiving unemployment benefits in an average month in 1984—the lowest level ever recorded. With the end of FSC this level is likely to fall below 30 percent in 1985. This compares with 50–70 percent of the unemployed receiving benefits in the late 1970s.

Wait—the news gets worse. The Labor Department figures for the number of unemployed do not count discouraged workers (individuals who have been out of work for so long they have given up looking for a job). Because a claimant must be seeking work to receive unemployment compensation, discouraged workers, by definition, do not receive unemployment benefits. If discouraged workers are added to the number of officially unemployed, the number of jobless who are without unemployment benefits rises even higher. Including discouraged workers, *6.6 million jobless received no benefits in February 1985.*

What happens to those who have exhausted unemployment benefits? In over half the states, families of the unemployed in which both parents are present are ineligible for welfare aid, even if the family is impoverished. In most of these states, unemployed two-parent families are also ineligible for any Medicaid coverage for themselves and their children, no matter how low their income.

• This information is taken from *Unemployed and Unprotected*, by John Bickerman, issued by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 236 Massachusetts Ave. N.E., Suite 305, Washington, DC 20002. The Center has published a number of first-rate reports on the federal budget, programs affecting low-income Americans, defense spending, and tax policy. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(4) *Grievance Procedures.* Harvard workers feel a need for a more structured and equitable grievance system. Workers who feel that they have been unfairly fired now have a right to appeal to a grievance committee—but all the arbitrators are paid by Harvard.

Women workers are looking to the union to establish procedures for sexual-harassment grievances. Harvard does have guidelines for such complaints; but workers find them too weak. If the panel should rule in a woman's favor, no guarantee exists that any action will be taken. Because sexual harassment is a much-discussed issue on the campus, Harvard conducted a survey on the subject last year. Female faculty and students were interviewed, but not secretaries and other staff.

Harvard UAW will negotiate for a contract that shortens the time until a grievance hearing takes place, with binding third-party arbitration. The contract will also provide a transfer for the employee without loss of pay or seniority, while the case is under consideration.

(5) *Respect.* You can't write respect into a contract clause, but many workers believe that proving their strength by organizing will win them the respect they found difficult to gain as individual workers. "Secretaries," says Norma Diala, "are looked upon like Xerox machines. If it 'hurts' Harvard to pay us higher wages, they'll respect our work and us as workers more."

A New Optimism for the Future

HARVARD UAW has been cultivating additional sources of support for the workers in their universitywide campaign. Student groups and some faculty members have expressed a willingness to help. A network of alumni has become active. A group called Friends of Harvard UAW has been formed to coordinate people outside the university.

Harvard UAW members identified strongly with their Yale counterparts, during their struggle, and participated in solidarity demonstrations with them, traveling to Yale to give support to the strikers and picketing Yale President Giamatti when he dined with Harvard President Bok in Boston during the Harvard–Yale football weekend. Garrett Rosenblatt, a Harvard alumnus who works for Radcliffe, was particularly impressed by the spirit of the Yale workers. "People weren't just talking about the immediate benefits that the union would bring; they were going beyond that, into a renewed consciousness of what it means to be a worker in this country today."

Word of the Yale victory came during an all-day Harvard–UAW meeting that was upbeat to begin with, but jubilant when the call came from New Haven. For months, reports Kris Rondeau, "workers at Harvard have been seeing the advantages of collective action. Something is happening, and management can't stop it." □

David Bromwich

Mr. Kristol Enlightens the Europeans

The March 1985 *Encounter* features an address to Western Europe by Irving Kristol. A warning in three parts, with the logical structure of a syllogism backed by a gun, Kristol's article is entitled "A Transatlantic 'Misunderstanding': The Case of Central America." Its proposals to our European allies are of great interest, both as an index of the mentality of some policy-makers and as a mark of the growing truculence of neoconservatives. Left-wing American opinion, Kristol argues, is moving toward a consistent isolationism; right-wing opinion sees the necessity of alliances but expects a return for its investment in them; the future of NATO depends, therefore, on the good will of the right, and Kristol wants our allies to know what counts as a good return.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Europeans who wish to preserve NATO will have to support Ronald Reagan's agenda in Latin America. The consequences of independent action, or even of critical detachment from our policy of intervention, are sure to be severe, "even to the point of the withdrawal of US forces from the European continent." The allies are required to choose: either the loss of America as a friend, or unconditional support for whatever we may do in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and the other countries of the region.

Kristol's style in this article is as interesting as his argument. He writes as a late, self-conscious, transatlantic exponent of liberal imperialism, with an unmisgiving respect for the "imperial past, about which most Europeans are convinced they ought to feel guilty." He speaks to 20th-century Europeans much as 19th-century Europeans spoke to Americans.

"Unfortunately," Kristol declares, "the world is what it is." He treats his European readers as innocents, to whom the world must be explained for the first time. He talks to them about socialism and capitalism, equality and necessity, enchanting dreams and harsh truths, as one would talk to a very small child. Indeed, his attitude borders on contempt: these superannuated powers, thinks Kristol, are almost not worth talking to; his article may be their last chance to *take the hint*. He consents, however, with a significant show of patience, to assist in the tedious business of trying to make them understand their predicament. The impression of a dutiful generosity is broken only once or twice, at moments of extreme vexation, by short outbursts in the presidential manner of recent press conferences: "Yes, there really are dominoes out there."

We proceed to give some extracts:

Specimen 1 • "When one speaks to friendly West Europeans about this matter [that is, their refusal to cooperate with us in Nicaragua], one is provided with the reassurance that much of this public behaviour is 'merely' a response to the demands of domestic politics.... What is it about domestic politics in the nations of Western Europe that coerces their governments—even nominally conservative governments, and unquestionably pro-American governments—to act in so disruptive a way?"

We can give him the answer in one word: it is the force of *public opinion* in the countries in question; one of the real drawbacks of modern democracy, from Kristol's point of view. Incidentally, it is a new conceit to suppose that the people "coerce" their governments in a system of popular suffrage. Poor governments: they should find themselves a more agreeable people. Perhaps, in the better system that Kristol may ask a think tank to dream up, the people will confine themselves to complaints about minor annoyances, which they can spell out on small slips of paper and drop into a suggestion box supplied by the government. This system will be called Enterprise Democracy.

"It is only a bit of an exaggeration," Kristol admits, "to say that foreign policy professionals usually find they have more in common with other foreign policy professionals than with the citizenry of their own countries." Plainly, he himself is happy in the company of the Kissingers and Brzezinskis of this world, as he would be in the company of Metternich or Castlereagh. He feels that he owes an implicit trust to the soundness of their judgments: something he can never feel about the lowly, stupid (and shockable) voter, who has never heard of most of these professionals, because they have never run for office.

Specimen 2 • "Once you insist that everyone improve his condition equally, you have guaranteed that no one will improve his condition at all."

This profound axiom Kristol first offered to the poor of the West; he now extends it (as an unlooked-for spiritual comfort) to the poor everywhere. It is, of course, a devious truism, for the effort of reform has seldom been to improve everyone equally. It has rather been to assure that something steady is done to reduce the grossness of existing inequalities. Once, however, that effort has been derided as an absurd hope for total equality, the way lies open to Kristol's conclusion: no matter how desperate the misery you see before you, be content; the social arrangements that produced it are still the only hope for improvement; all other remedies will be catastrophic. Anyway, "helping poor, suffering people," says Kristol, "is not always as easy as, at first glance, it seems." This is a gospel preached to the poor—but welcomed as cordially as at first glance it might seem meant to be by the rich, the greedy, and the powerful.

Specimen 3 • "Though everyone expresses pious approval of such mediation [as the Contadora process], the sad truth is that it is more political theatre than anything else. These countries have no independent 'leverage' on the situation—they are simply too weak.... So the '*Contadora*' nations cannot constitute a 'third force' that would change the present realities in Central America."

In the same way, there were once two farmers,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

McDonald and McGibbon, who conducted their feud from neighboring tracts of land. Blair lived on a plot adjacent to both, and tried to settle their differences peaceably. But McDonald (who was the stronger of the two) shot Blair in the legs and arms, tied him to a tree and covered him with a bale of hay; and then got another neighbor (whose name was Kristol) to say: "Blair has no 'leverage' on the situation, he is simply too weak."

Specimen 4 • "There is much to be said, by way of explanation if not justification, for the traditional popular indifference in North America to events and conditions in Latin America.... The natural sensibility of Americans withdrew into a protective shell when faced with such senselessness. There are those who claim that the United States has made its own contribution to this sorry state of affairs by its occasional blundering intervention. There is some truth to this—but not much."

Not much: Guatemala 1954, Cuba 1961, Dominican Republic 1965, Chile 1973, Nicaragua 1983—to say nothing of the invasions, at the rate of one every three years, earlier in the century. Truly a wonderful protective shell, bespeaking natural sensibilities no less wonderful. What part in this story was played by the United Fruit Company?—whose accounts Kristol leaves out of his account, presumably because it was a corporation and not a government. Did the managers of United Fruit politely inform their employees that "helping poor, suffering people is not always as easy as, at first glance, it seems"?

Specimen 5 • "It is not more generous welfare allotments that these countries need, but more vigorous economic growth. From this point of view, the proper use of our economic aid should be to finance cuts in tax rates—taxes are absurdly high in all these countries—along with cuts in governmental subsidies to inefficient producers. These and other measures to spur private investment and private economic activity hold out the hope of putting their economies on a progressive economic track."

So, after being told that these people are different from us, the products of a "senseless" history, and hardly to be comprehended in the same human terms, it turns out that their problems have a solution; and, curiously enough, *just* the solution that has been found to work in Reagan's America: economic incentives to big business, cuts in subsidies to small business, a healthy and robust strangulation of welfare payments. Thus Kristol offers two sorts of explanation of Latin America. Though distinct from each other, they are divided only by the author's forgetfulness.

Given the amount of private ownership in Nicaragua, for example, and the widespread eagerness for the very stimulus Kristol proposes, a U.S. trade embargo would seem the last tactic to employ in persuading its government that capitalism works. Yet it appears doubtful that Kristol argued strenuously against the imposition of the embargo; and within the terms of his discussion he could easily have argued in favor of it: that would mean sliding from his second explanation (Central America is American, and can be made over in our image) back to his first (Central America is senseless, and any use of power there makes sense).

Specimen 6 • The editors of *Encounter* had the clever idea of reprinting, as a companion to Kristol's article, an essay by Mario Vargas Llosa on the double standard of Western intellectuals who comment on Latin America. Every word of Vargas Llosa's indictment tells against apologists for tyrannies of the left, and every word of it tells with equal force against apologists for tyrannies of the right. For Vargas Llosa condemns not only "the insurrectionary impulses of the Left" but also "the conspiracies of reactionary castes"; a class of persons about whom Kristol has nothing to say.

Vargas Llosa also observes: "When an American or European intellectual... advocates for Latin American countries political options and methods he would never countenance in his own society, he is betraying a fundamental doubt about the capacity of the Latin American countries to achieve the liberty and the respect for the rights of others that prevail in the Western democracies." The past affiliations and present conduct of the Nicaraguan rebels give an accurate impression of the political options and methods Kristol will countenance in Central America. It is for the sake of these options and methods that he now extorts the aid of Europe, on pain of the forfeiture of American participation in NATO.

No such development seemed likely to Vargas Llosa when he published another fine essay, "In Nicaragua" (*New York Times Magazine*, April 28, 1985)—an article skeptical of the government and its enemies alike, but mildly optimistic about the country's prospects if left to itself. But then, conscious as he was of the scandalous impertinence of the word "totalitarian" as applied to Nicaragua in 1985, Vargas Llosa may not have reckoned fully with the motives and characters of the people who abuse such a word. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hendrik Hertzberg

The Vietnam Hangover

How the American Political Cycle Got Smashed

That was quite a fuss the media made this spring about the 10th anniversary of the fall of Saigon. Magazine editors and television producers cannot resist what is known as a hook. Yet in the intensity of this outpouring there was more at work than media faddism. The issues raised by America's war in Vietnam are still alive, the passions still warm. We may be out of Vietnam, but Vietnam is not out of us. It suffuses our political and ideological universe like the hiss of creation.

A consensus about the war has yet to emerge. For some of us, Theodore Draper's summary (rendered in a 1968 essay in *Commentary*, of all places) still stands: the war was "a political debacle, a military folly, and a moral disgrace." Yet all three elements of this harsh judgment remain controversial. The moral debate has been the bitterest, the military discussion the calmest and most productive (also the least consequential). Perhaps the most pervasive legacy of the war, and the least discussed, has been the political legacy. What did Vietnam do to our politics? In a word: everything.

□

The war in Vietnam caused a terrible discontinuity in the natural rhythms of American political life. It violently interrupted the stately swings back and forth between innovation and consolidation that had marked the first two-thirds of our century. It thus created the present era of dissonance and confusion.

There was a logic to the old alternations. The period of progressive reform from Theodore Roosevelt through Wilson was followed by the long conservative afternoon of Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover. Then came the time of extraordinary innovation called the New Deal, interrupted by World War II, and continuing, in a minor key, into Truman's Fair Deal. There followed another sleepy period of consolidation under Eisenhower.

And then came 1960, and a wonderful sense of expectancy. John F. Kennedy was exciting, and so was LBJ; for the first couple of years after President Kennedy's death it was still going to be a great decade. President Johnson—the peace candidate—was returned to office in 1964 on an immense popular landslide, bringing with him heavy majorities in both houses of Congress. An enormous amount of creative legislative work was done around that period, everything from Medicare to federal aid to education to the civil rights and voting rights bills. And then it was all cut short, and what cut it short was Vietnam. Vietnam aborted the entire generational reinvigoration and completion of the New Deal that had been, as it were, on America's schedule.

In retrospect it appears that the grand cycle of American politics was actually interrupted by two tragedies, the Kennedy assassination and the Vietnam War. But how great a *national* tragedy one judges the assassination to have been depends to a large degree on one's assessment of what Kennedy would have done about Vietnam. In that theological dispute I tend to side with those who think Kennedy would not have escalated the war, that he would have temporized for another year and then, once safely reelected in 1964, would have cut his losses. Still, it's unknowable what Kennedy would have done. We do know what Johnson did about Vietnam; but the poisonous effects of his war policy did not really begin to be felt for almost three years. In the domestic arena Kennedy's work was continued by Johnson, and it was not until 1966 that things began to get really ugly. It wasn't the assassination that created that anxiety we all became so familiar with during the last half of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1960s, that terrible feeling that things had come unstuck. It was Vietnam. Vietnam made us crazy. The assassination was a dreadful thing. But Vietnam was like an assassination every day.

II

OF THE WAR'S MANY BANEFUL political effects, let's consider two: first, the discrediting of the liberal social dream; and second, the fragmenting and embittering of our politics.

Vietnam had the effect of smothering a nascent American social democracy. This happened partly because of a decision designed to avoid such an outcome: the decision to pay for the war through inflation. Johnson decided not to ask for a rise in taxes to pay for the war. He did not want to give up his domestic program, and he calculated, probably correctly, that the kind of appeal he would have to make in order to get a war tax would either make the war unpopular, because taxes are unpopular, or would make the war impossible to limit, because the sort of fervor it might have been necessary to whip up to get a war tax might not have been so easy to control. Most likely it would have done both.

The result of the policy of social spending plus war spending minus taxes was to turn the economy into an engine of inflation. The inflationary storm raged through the end of the 1970s, with the help of the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979. Even though much of this happened under Nixon and Ford, the basic political result was to discredit the Democrats as economic managers.

The other way that Vietnam thwarted the emergence of a mature social democracy in the United States was by short-circuiting the Great Society that might have been. This is not to minimize the accomplishments of that period between the end of 1963 and the middle of 1966. The debate occasioned by Charles Murray's book *Losing Ground* has pretty well established that the Great Society "worked," above all that its universalist programs worked. But the Great Society was half-formed. It was done on the cheap. It never was able to carry through its own logic, because it was thrown together in a race against time; as Johnson understood, Vietnam would soon put an end to the country's receptivity.

The Great Society was a fast and dirty improvisation. Medicare, for example, enshrined the principle that people who are old and sick should be cared for whether they have money or not. And Medicaid—a politically much weaker program, because means-tested programs are always weaker than universal programs—established the general principle that poverty should not be an insuperable bar to minimal care. Those are great accomplishments; but it is also true that the programs have been enormously wasteful. They did nothing about the structure of fee-for-service private medicine in this country. Medicare and Medicaid simply ladled vast amounts of money into the existing system of power relations in the medical-care industry.

The doctors were simply bought off. The system has worked beautifully for them. Benefits have trickled down to the patients, who are generally much better off than before. But anyone who has any firsthand experience with these programs knows how inadequate they are, how pathetic compared to the corresponding programs in such countries as West Germany, or England, or Israel, or even Canada.

Medicare and Medicaid, in other words, were a poor substitute for the kind of universal health insurance that never got enacted. Many other Great Society programs have a similar truncated quality. And this is to say nothing of the programs that never got enacted in any form. Tax reform is a good example. It should have happened during the 1960s. It never did. Ditto for welfare reform. And it was the war in Vietnam that was to blame.

• Oddly enough, it is the Nixon administration that offers the best evidence for the proposition that there was indeed an enormous wave of creative reform that should have happened and didn't because of Vietnam. Consider what has been called Nixon's Disraeli period, when he was very much under the influence of Daniel Patrick Moynihan. The Nixon years saw the greatest growth in Social Security, in social welfare programs generally, and in environmental programs, which essentially did not exist before the Nixon administration. Some of the things Nixon proposed look positively radical by today's timid standards. The best example was his welfare reform proposal, the Family Assistance Plan, which would have put a floor under the income of everybody in the country.

There are congressional liberals who now rue the day they opposed that particular Nixon program. The fact that they did oppose it was a consequence of Vietnam—to be precise, a consequence of the atmosphere of mistrust, hostility, and suspicion that was created by Nixon's paranoia about Vietnam. The point is that the natural cycle of American politics, which was supposed to bring about the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

completion of the American welfare state, was so strong that it rolled right through into the Nixon White House. Yet when it got there it was destroyed by Vietnam.

So the first bleak political legacy of Vietnam is the souring of the idea of social security broadly understood, which, among the prosperous nations of the world, is something that has happened only in the United States.

THE SECOND LEGACY is the fragmentation of our politics. Vietnam gave us Richard Nixon, his rise and his fall. His rise was a direct consequence of Vietnam. He ran as the peace candidate, the candidate with the secret plan to end the war. Hubert Humphrey lost because he was too closely tied to Johnson and the war. When he began belatedly to distance himself, he made dramatic gains. But it was too late.

Watergate, too, was a direct consequence of Vietnam. The Plumbers' unit was created because of Nixon's obsessive concern with secrecy and national security, and particularly with leaks about the war in Vietnam, beginning with stories about the true extent of American bombing and culminating in the *Pentagon Papers*. The burglary of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office prefigured the burglary of the Watergate. And the cumulative effect of the lies, deceits, crimes, and abuses of power attendant upon the Vietnam War created the atmosphere in which the notion of removing a sitting president became thinkable.

One might even argue that Vietnam gave us every president since Johnson. Vietnam and Vietnam's offspring, Watergate, were the principal causes of Gerald Ford's defeat and Jimmy Carter's victory. By the time we reach Ronald Reagan the thread begins to grow thin, but it's still there. Vietnam–Watergate weakened the Republican establishment, as it weakened all establishments in all institutions, and thus it opened the way for Reagan and for the takeover of the Republican party by the insurgent conservative movement. That gave Reagan the nomination; and the inflation launched by Vietnam helped give him the election.

• But it was the Democratic party, not the Republican party, that was the real battleground of Vietnam. In origin, the Vietnam conflict actually was what Robert Dole (in the 1976 vice-presidential debate) called all the American wars of this century: a "Democrat war." But if the war was a Democratic phenomenon, so was the movement to stop the war. The Republican role was limited to cheering for war, shouting for war, and finally, under Nixon, waging war. From the very beginning, insofar as the debate took place in the political mainstream at all, it took place within the Democratic party. Lyndon Johnson proposed the Gulf of Tonkin resolution. Wayne Morse and Ernest Gruening opposed it. All of them were Democrats. The war tore apart the Democrats, not the Republicans.

All of the present cleavages in the Democratic party can be traced to the war. The war totally destroyed the foreign policy consensus that had prevailed in the party for 15 years, beginning about 1950. Robert Kuttner has a good nickname for that consensus: macho détente. The two sides of macho détente were symbolized by President Kennedy's two nuclear triumphs, the Cuban missile crisis and the test-ban treaty.

Before Vietnam, the Democrats had the Republicans outflanked at both ends. But Vietnam split macho détente right down the middle, leaving each half of the party with half a foreign policy. Vietnam alienated the labor unions from the intellectuals, the party regulars from the party activists, the volunteers from the officeholders, the young from the middle-aged. Some of the passions have cooled. But in the Democratic party fragmentation has become a way of life.

• The war also created two kinds of ideologues: the New Leftists, active in the late '60s and early '70s, and the neoconservatives, active in the 1980s.

Consider the progression of Students for a Democratic Society. In 1961, SDS put forth the Port Huron statement, written largely by Tom Hayden, then fresh from the editorship of the *Michigan Daily*. It was a very American document—it would not be too much to say that it was a patriotic document. Its themes of economic and participatory democracy were a conscious effort to develop a radicalism rooted in the American experience. In 1964 SDS supported Johnson against Goldwater. It viewed Johnson with a kind of wary affection; its slogan that year was "Part of the Way with LBJ."

Then came the war, and in a remarkably short time SDS went mad. Its members forgot about participatory democracy and began chanting slogans translated from the Chinese—slogans like "Long Live the Victory of the People's War." They began talking about how they would have to learn to be "good communists." Some of them did more

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than talk; they blew things up, including themselves.

The "good communists" were not, of course, typical of the antiwar movement. Even so, a much larger number of people, some hundreds of thousands, got involved in a deeply alienated brand of protest politics. Norman Thomas advised the movement to wash the flag, not burn it. Few listened. Many found their way back eventually, as Tom Hayden has found his way back to the homegrown economic populism he started with. But at the very least, an enormous number of people of my generation were made suspicious of and hostile to liberal anticommunism. Vietnam gave anticommunism a bad name, just as, a decade later, the Reagan administration's weakness for military dictatorships has given the valid distinction between authoritarianism and totalitarianism a bad name.

Obviously, many of the social movements that occupied the attention of the left during the 1960s would have happened with or without Vietnam. Women's liberation and gay liberation and black militancy and the rest were in the cards, war or no war. The same is true of the cultural upheaval that came to be called the counterculture. What Vietnam did was to embitter and alienate these movements, giving them a corrosive edge that increased the violence of the reaction to them.

Irving Howe & Michael Walzer

Were We Wrong About Vietnam?

This article first appeared in the New Republic, *August 18, 1979, at a moment when the conservative backlash regarding Vietnam had begun to make itself felt. We tried to argue, briefly, the cogency of our opposition to the Vietnam War and why we thought we had been basically right. We still think so. Since there's a lot of talk these days about Vietnam, and since many* Dissent *readers have probably not seen this piece, we reprint it here, as a reaffirmation of our views.* —EDS.

No question that human beings can ask themselves is more attractive morally than "Were we wrong?"

It is a question now being insistently put to those of us who opposed the Vietnam War. The Cambodian horrors and the shameful Hanoi policy toward refugees are evidence, we are told, that we were wrong. Or at the least they provide a reason for reconsidering our views. Even if the good faith of those who put this question may sometimes be doubted, there can be little harm, perhaps some good, in looking back and reconsidering.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECALL that opponents of the war did not share a common point of view. On the contrary. There were divergent, even conflicting opinions among those who attacked American intervention in the war.

Perhaps the simplest, and the one that with the growing bitterness in the country gained increasing support within the antiwar movement, was:

(1) The victory of Hanoi and the Viet Cong was desirable because it would further the "progressive cause" (that is, communism). Or less bluntly, it was desirable because only a left-authoritarian government could be both revolutionary and ruthless enough to cope with the problems of the Third World. People holding such views ranged from a cluster of old Stalinists to a large number of new leftists.

Those who gave "principled" support to Vietnamese communism were and remain consistent, if not always candid.

These are people who would have supported Hanoi whether or not it spoke for a majority of the Vietnamese people, whether or not the opposing Saigon regime was democratic, whether or not the United States had a genuine national interest in Southeast Asia. They can still have no reason to change their minds (William Kunstler has not), for they never were so naive as to suppose a Viet Cong victory would bring democratic liberties to Vietnam. Nor did they particularly care. Some of them have endorsed far worse things than what Hanoi has been doing to the boat people.

Others, including some intellectuals, supported Hanoi not out of principle, for they were not Communists, but because they were swept away by sentiment and indignation. Some intellectuals journeyed to Hanoi and came back with statements of feckless admiration for its society, suggesting they did not just oppose U.S. intervention but felt it would be *good* if Hanoi won the war. Perhaps these people will now publicly reconsider what they said about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

• This brings us rather naturally to the other ideological product of Vietnam, neoconservatism. There are many ways of looking at neoconservatism, and it is certainly as much a cultural as an ideological phenomenon (one of the many things it has in common with sectarian leftism).

Neoconservatism is mostly a phenomenon of intellectuals, largely Jewish, once rooted in the old socialist left and in literary journalism. It has emerged in great part as a reaction to events in the 1960s that were themselves reactions to the war in Vietnam. Among the precursors of neoconservatism were such men as John P. Roche and Tom Kahn—liberals and social democrats who passionately supported the war because they saw it entirely in abstract ideological terms, as a struggle against communism. To view the war in any other way, they thought, was to be objectively pro-Communist. (Indeed Norman Podhoretz, like Caesar dividing Gaul, has divided the antiwar movement into three parts: pro-Communist, anti-anti-Communist, and anti-American. Which of the three categories he fell into he has not said.) Today, a retrospective defense of the war is an important part of the neoconservative ideological program.

A THIRD—AND MORE PALATABLE—political legacy of Vietnam has been the democratization of Ameri-

Hanoi and the Viet Cong, as the influential French writer Jean Lacouture recently has done.

THE REMAINING POINTS OF VIEW in the antiwar movement differed sharply, differed in kind, from the first one, though in the heat of the antiwar struggle this may not always have been clear. A point of view that almost all opponents of the war except the most rigid ideologues shared to some extent, or resorted to on occasion, was:

(2) The war was morally wrong, since American intervention constituted an effort by a great power to impose its imperial will upon a people that had long been struggling to determine its own fate. In doing so, the United States used increasingly brutal methods: mass bombings with B-52s, the destruction of peasant villages, the violation of Cambodia. Many of the people holding such opinions were not ideological at all.

There was much truth in this position, but it could not by itself provide a sufficient *analysis* of the Vietnam War. If the methods used by the United States were what troubled opponents of the war, then what would these opponents make of the methods used by the other side? American methods undoubtedly were more destructive, partly because of our advanced military technology and the sheer firepower that we were able to employ, partly for reasons that require a political analysis of the war. But the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong were brutal enough when brutality served their purposes.

If what troubled antiwar people was the fact of American intervention in a far-off conflict, this was indeed a consideration of substance. Nonintervention is an important moral principle. But is it an absolute principle? Were these people against *all* interventions? Or only American intervention? In a world where the opponent great power, the totalitarian Soviet Union, clearly did not hesitate to intervene in the affairs of small countries, would these people support counterinterventions? Suppose the U.S. were (improbably) to intervene on behalf of political forces they favored, say, the dissident blacks of Rhodesia, would they oppose that intervention? These questions are not easy to answer, but they persist as a heritage of certain kinds of opposition to the Vietnam War: good-hearted but not always carefully thought out. In any case, the moral argument against the Vietnam War, which it was essential to make, could only be rendered secure when tied to a political analysis.

BUT THERE WERE MANY PEOPLE, especially the more realistic members of the Washington establishment, who cared little about either the moral issue or the political analysis. Coming to oppose the war somewhat tardily, they used a pragmatic argument such as:

(3) Whatever the original rationale for intervening in Vietnam, it soon became clear that the costs of winning the war (to say nothing of figuring out what "winning" might mean) had become so enormous that it would be a mistake to carry the war to a triumphant conclusion even if that were possible. Had there been some crucial national interest in the Vietnam outcome, as there was in Berlin, then it would have made sense to continue the fighting so long as there was a reasonable hope of a victory that would serve that interest. But there was no such national interest in Vietnam, and no hope of such a

(Continued on p. 404)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can foreign policy. This is the broader pattern of which the so-called Vietnam syndrome is a part.

The Vietnam syndrome is merely a nasty name for the fact that the American people would prefer not to have another war like the war in Vietnam. The term is calculated to make prudence sound like pathology. But the broader pattern involves much more than the public's very intelligent reluctance to go to war for light and transient causes.

Vietnam taught the American people to be skeptical of their leaders; equally important, by dividing their leaders—which is to say, by destroying the old foreign-policy consensus—it gave the people a chance to choose among alternative foreign policies.

This has been a decidedly mixed blessing (for example, in the field of arms control it seems to have produced an impasse in which the Republicans are unable to negotiate a treaty and the Democrats are unable to ratify one); but a blessing it has been.

In August 1964, 300 Americans had already been killed in Vietnam and a thousand wounded. Yet there were only a half-dozen American correspondents in Saigon, and LBJ was running as the peace candidate in a campaign in which the war was a relatively minor issue. Such relative public indifference to a war with American deaths running into the hundreds would be absolutely unthinkable today.

victory. Through a sheer massing of military power, the U.S. might still have achieved a result that it could call winning, but at a price—political, moral, human—so high that winning would constitute a greater disaster than not winning.

The pragmatists generally accepted that the U.S. must show firmness in opposing communism. But even some conservatives came to recognize that Vietnam might not be the best place to show it—indeed, was probably the worst—and that the Vietnam War was draining energies that could be better applied elsewhere. The pragmatic argument was advanced primarily by people without a hint of rebelliousness, but it was used, when convenient, by many of the antiwar protesters.

THERE REMAINS, FINALLY, the position of many socialists and liberals, in outline something like:

(4) The war in Vietnam was partly an inherited colonial war, with the U.S. taking over from France; partly a civil war between two Vietnamese camps; and partly a battleground in the worldwide conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. By about the mid-1950s it became evident that the conflict in Vietnam had taken on a decisive and probably irreversible political character that precluded the Saigon government from winning mass support among the Vietnamese people, or undertaking the kind of social-political measures that might enable it to do so. The U.S. allied itself with a series of corrupt, unpopular, and authoritarian regimes (Diem, Ky, Thieu) fighting against a Communist government and a Communist-led guerrilla movement that, together, unfortunately had succeeded in appropriating the historic energies of Vietnamese nationalism. It became highly unlikely, therefore, that the war could be "won"; or that "our" side could seriously be said to be fighting for freedom; or that the majority of Vietnamese supported either the Saigon government or American intervention.

This political analysis, merely sketched here, lent weight and cogency to the moral and pragmatic arguments against the war, since it helped explain why the American intruders, neither more nor less moral than other people, behaved so badly in Vietnam. If the U.S. had been able to gain the support of the peasants in the countryside and the educated middle classes in the cities, the Americans would probably not have resorted to some of the methods that were used.

IT NEVER WAS NECESSARY to defend the Communist regime in Hanoi or the Viet Cong guerrillas in order to oppose American intervention. Some of us around *Dissent* hoped for the emergence of a Vietnamese "third force," capable of rallying the people in a progressive direction by enacting land reforms and defending civil liberties. In retrospect this hope of the early 1950s may seem a vain one. Vietnam had been fiercely polarized by the French colonialists who, unlike the British in India, allowed almost no freedom for the early Vietnamese nationalists. This, in turn, made it virtually certain that the liberal and socialist tendencies among these nationalists would be rendered helpless and that the better-organized, more combative Communists would be assured of domination within the nationalist movement. Communist leadership of Vietnamese nationalism was the single decisive factor of recent Vietnamese history—something probably without parallel elsewhere in the world.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The debate over the funding of the Contras of Nicaragua demonstrates that the American people are less apt to give their assent to war, even when American lives are not directly at stake, without a full and convincing account of the war's aims and prospects. This need not be viewed as a product of cynicism or weariness or morbid suspiciousness. On the contrary, it reflects a healthy spirit of self-government. And it is a positive legacy of the tragedy of Vietnam.

III

IN THE GENRE OF FICTION known as the "alternative present" story—a subgenre, really, of fantasy and science fiction—the author posits that some crucial historical event turned out differently, and then imagines what the present would be like. The first such book I read was an obscure novel called *Bring the Jubilee,* by Ward Moore, set in about the year 1950. The premise was that the South had won the Civil War. Among the consequences was that Germany won the first (and only) World War—not such a bad thing, since French fascism turns out to be less virulent than the German variety. (Also, the president of the United States—its territory limited to the northeast, and heavy on the dark satanic mills—was Norman Thomas. I liked that part.)

A more recent, and very clever example of the genre is Kingsley Amis's *The Alteration.* The title refers both to the main plot device (a boy soprano's

Working for a bit of freedom in Third World countries does not strike us as futile, even though both left-authoritarian and realpolitik analysts join in sneering at the idea. But it is very difficult. And the policies of the United States, largely tilted toward the support of two-bit autocrats, constitute a major reason for the difficulty. Whatever small chance there may have been for a nonauthoritarian solution in Vietnam was effectively destroyed by the tacit collaboration of all the great powers.

By the Kennedy years, perhaps earlier, it was clear that the Saigon government would remain in the hands of mandarin authoritarians who could not understand the revolutionary sentiments sweeping portions of the country and who were hostile even to mild reforms. This meant the war would now settle into a struggle between a totalitarian government (Hanoi) exploiting the nationalist tradition and peasant demands, and an authoritarian government (Saigon) precariously kept in power by foreign money, arms, and troops. Even if one judged the authoritarian government to be "the lesser evil," the reality was that giving that government support meant enabling the victory of its totalitarian opponent. A dismal choice!

The United States sent its troops into Vietnam to reverse the verdict of a local struggle, which meant, in turn, imposing a ghastly cost in death and suffering upon the Vietnamese. As it turned out, the U.S. could not reverse that verdict finally; it could only delay its culmination.

The consequences of the Communist victory, as some of us did suggest a decade ago, have been dreadful. Only fellow travelers and fools would deny that. But who can say what the magnitude of death and destruction would have been if we had fought our way to victory? (With atomic weapons? Had we not used every other kind?) Those who now bemoan our failure to "persist" in Vietnam ignore the fact that the U.S. already had more than half a million men there, vast quantities of weapons, and a large fleet of giant bombers. Still we could not win. Are the partisans of persistence prepared to offer some estimate of the costs of persisting?

THOSE OF US who opposed American intervention yet did not want a Communist victory were in the difficult position of having no happy ending to offer—for the sad reason that no happy ending was possible any longer, if ever it had been. And we were in the difficult position of urging a relatively complex argument at a moment when most Americans, pro- and antiwar, wanted blinding simplicities.

Our views were largely swept aside within the antiwar movement, though there were people involved in the campaign for Eugene McCarthy and the moratorium of 1969 who shared these views at least in part. Those who prevailed, or at least those most likely to be heard above the din, were the William Kunstlers, the David Dellingers, the Tom Haydens, tacit or open supporters of Hanoi, the very people who recently refused to sign Joan Baez's statement criticizing the Hanoi government for its treatment of refugees.

None of this, to be sure, is to say the liberal and socialist wing of the antiwar movement made no mistakes; we made a lot of them. But on the basic issue we firmly believe we were right. We were right in refusing to give credence either to Saigon or Hanoi, in refusing to support the imperial backers of both. There is no reason whatever to change that conviction. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

campaign to avoid the honor of remaining a soprano through surgical intervention) and to a particular "alteration" of history: Amis imagines what might have happened if Martin Luther, instead of leading the Reformation, had become pope. It's very slyly done. There's a particularly funny scene in which today's pope, who is English, entertains at tea. ("Shall we pour?") As little details accumulate, the reader gradually realizes that the pope is in fact Harold Wilson.

□

In the alternative-present spirit, let's imagine what might have happened had there been no war in Vietnam.

In 1968, President Johnson was reelected overwhelmingly against token opposition offered by the Republicans, who nominated former Vice-President Richard Nixon as a sacrificial lamb. President Johnson died in office two years later. The mourning for him was comparable to the mourning for Lincoln; along the route of his funeral train from Washington across the country to Texas, the silent crowds were seldom less than three deep. President Humphrey continued the building of the Great Society, using the emotion generated by Johnson's death to secure the enactment of a comprehensive system of socialized medicine. In 1972 he easily defeated his "me, too" opponent, George Romney. President Humphrey served until 1977, choosing not to run for reelection on grounds of health.

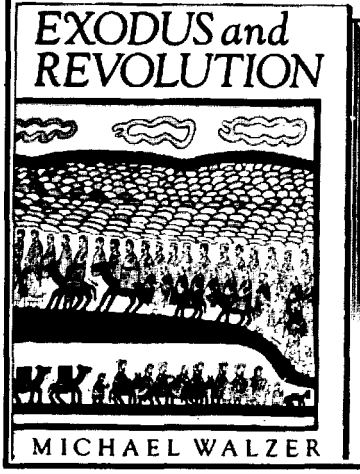
The 1976 campaign was a classic liberal-conservative battle, with Senator Robert Kennedy of New York narrowly defeating a former governor of California, Ronald Reagan, who ran on a "Who lost Vietnam?" platform. The second President Kennedy edged the by now aging Reagan once more in 1980 and served through 1984, when the long period of the second (or third, by some counts) New Deal at last came to an end.

The Democratic candidate in 1984, Senator Jerry Brown of California, was a great favorite of intellectuals. But he was no match for the Republican nominee, a distinguished-looking ex-soldier who left the Army in 1966 to seek greater opportunities in business and politics. That nominee, the first deep Southerner to attain the White House since before the Civil War, was of course Governor William C. Westmoreland of South Carolina. President Westmoreland, by the way, is said to be fond of golf. □

"A rewarding book—elegantly written, subtly argued, full of stimulating suggestions."
—JOHN GROSS, New York Times

"Michael Walzer shows us the real power of the Exodus story as a political document."—*ROBERT ALTER, University of California, Berkeley*

"Mr. Walzer weaves a brilliant tapestry composed of strands of the biblical story, commentaries on it and reports of subsequent revolutionary activity that employ the same strands but weave them into new patterns."
—ROBERT McAFEE BROWN, New York Times Book Review



Herman Landshoff

$15.95 at bookstores, or direct from the publisher. Toll-free (800) 638-3030 Major credit cards accepted.

BASIC BOOKS, INC.
10 East 53rd Street, New York 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Erazim Kohák

A Letter from Europe

VIENNA — There is, at first, no culture shock. So much about Europe seems familiar. American civilization, after all, had followed a basically European pattern well into the 1940s. Still in the last years before the suburban dispersal, Boston, with its elegant inner core of theaters, restaurants, and quiet residential streets, with its streetcars and its railways reaching out across a distinctly rural, farming area to other urban centers, remained recognizably a European city. Older Americans—and, by some strange cultural osmosis, many of the middle generation as well—still carry in their minds that image of America as essentially an urban civilization, with densely settled towns capable of generating trade and culture, serving as foci of an agricultural countryside. Coming to Europe, an American is still first aware of the similarity of what he encounters to his traditional image of America, not of the vast gap between that image and present-day American reality.

The culture shock comes months later, with the gradual realization that, in central Europe, it *still really is so*. The trains and streetcars are not bits of nostalgia but a working transportation system, making possible cities that are basically pedestrian areas. People do not pass each other unheeding in cars: they run into each other at the center of town where theaters, concert halls, and museums flourish. Going to the theater still is what it was in Boston in the '40s—and the play is likely to be reported in the next day's paper and discussed in cafés and in the streets. The streets are clean and comfortable; even at night they belong to the solitary walker.

The culture shock comes with the visual image of a street strewn with wind-blown litter and lined with decaying, half-abandoned housing, the faint smell of rotting garbage, shabby figures huddled in dank doorways, broken bottles in paper bags—and with the question: was it the Bronx? or South Boston? or Mexico City? or Santo Domingo?

It could have been anywhere in the Third World—or in the U.S. That is the true culture shock: the realization that, in the decades since the suburban dispersal, the U.S. has effectively abandoned the European civilizational pattern in favor of a Third World one. Certainly, there are the well-groomed suburbs in which many Americans have taken refuge, but those can be found, less extensive but no less opulent, in every Latin American city. It is the pattern that matters. The European pattern had been one of a purposeful use of communal resources to sustain an attractive urban environment—basically a walking-distance community—capable of generating and sustaining trade and culture, amid an agricultural countryside. By contrast, in the Third World urban sprawl swallows up cities and spills over the countryside, resulting in a pattern that is no longer urban or rural. The sprawl is too extensive to sustain a culture—that requires a community—or to make a public transport system viable. What remains is a mass of dispersed individuals, fostering individual opulence amid social disintegration. Public services crumble, communities with them. What remains is the faceless sprawl.

II

THE CULTURE SHOCK COMES with the recognition that the American culture pattern today corresponds far more to the Third World than to the European model. Certainly, the United States is astronomically more affluent than other Third World countries, with a per capita national product

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

below only that of Kuwait or the United Arab Emirates and vastly exceeding that of India or of Mexico. But the pattern and the direction of development is the same, committed to maximizing individual affluence at the cost of social irresponsibility and decay. What in the 1940s still had been essentially a European country across the seas has, by the mid-1980s, become a very affluent Third World one.

III

THE SHIFT WAS SO SUDDEN that our mental image of America has not kept pace with it. It happened in the period that most Americans remember as the years of Eisenhower's "Peace and Prosperity." In that decade, the world was rebuilding after the devastation of the war. Europe was systematically refurbishing its cities. Massive funds, in part provided by the Marshall Plan, served to rehabilitate and add urban housing, blocks of apartments together with the communal support and transport that makes cities possible. America was actually spending as much as Europe, but the pattern was different. Here the funds were dispersed in the form of payments to individuals, for the most part as veterans' benefits. Individuals do not build apartment houses or streetcar lines. They scatter, diligently erecting their individual homes on generous quarter-acre lots. In 1950, America still had cities and public transport to make them possible, with all the benefits cities can bring. By 1960 the erstwhile cities had become decaying slums amid faceless sprawl, their inhabitants dispersed too widely to support theaters. The trains stopped running; there were no more streetcars as the motor car, breathing noxious fumes, reigned supreme.

Was the auto the villain? Europeans, passing directly from their unconsummated love affair with the automobile to the recognition of its devastating effect, can be excused for seeing it in that role. Still, the roots go far deeper. The car made the suburban sprawl possible, but not necessary. The longing for open spaces can be satisfied with a pattern of urban apartments and weekend cottages. *The true villain, as throughout the Third World, was the decision to boost individual affluence by abandoning social responsibility.* America's postwar taxation did not keep pace with inflation, and the proportion of tax resources devoted to the common weal rather than to boosting individual affluence plummeted. American postwar policies were aimed at fostering private weal, not at sustaining an attractive communal environment. Though America's immense affluence masked it for a time, America had opted for a Third World pattern.

With that recognition, Mr. Reagan's policies and the approval with which they meet in the population at large become understandable. He is essentially a Third World leader, eschewing the European tradition of social responsibility and holding out a Third World vision—or, in American parlance, a "frontier" vision–of individual gain. His willingness to devote vast sums to defense does not contradict that: all Third World leaders love to maintain disproportionate defense establishments, financed in great part by borrowing abroad. Mr. Reagan's policies, so incomprehensible in terms of a European cultural pattern, fit very neatly a Third World one.

Ironically, this is something that Europeans find difficult to understand. They see Reagan's domestic policy in a European context, and tend to approve. They can muster little sympathy for the plight of, say, the American farmer: anyone who indulges in the luxury of a private automobile instead of riding a train appears as having no claim to public aid. I have given up trying to explain that the village of Cucumber Junction, Iowa, just might not be serviced by superb trains running on an hourly scheme—or that the American farmer does not have social medical coverage, stipends for his children in school, or a guaranteed generous old-age pension at 62. Europeans take it for granted that the United States is a European country: that it provides the same ample measure of public support, only on a scale as much more opulent as American cars are bigger. Few of them are capable of comprehending that, in America, payments to individuals substitute for, do not duplicate, a solid social investment.

For the latter is Europe's domestic problem. In a picturesque metaphor, it would not be wholly inaccurate to say that Europe suffers from the patchwork compromise between the Lassallean and the Eisenacher faction of social democracy at the Gotha Congress, criticized already by Karl Marx. Very broadly speaking, the Lassallean strain sees social democracy essentially as the bearer of the social responsibility that once had been the obligation of princes and remained unclaimed when liberal governments came to represent only the sum of individual interests rather than the common weal. By contrast, the Eisenacher vision assumed a functioning prince—at the time Bismarck—and under-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stood the task of social democracy as the use of social means to foster individual welfare. Thus, for example, while the use of communal resources to rehabilitate housing, in Europe or in America, can be considered generically social democratic—a conservative government would have lowered taxes and trusted an invisible hand to channel the released funds into construction—the European decision to invest public funds in urban housing can be considered Lassallean and the American decision to distribute them among individuals needing housing is in the Eisenacher tradition.

In Europe, the effect of the Lassallean emphasis is clearly visible. Thanks to it, the traditional urban culture survives here. When, however, the Lassallean tradition of public responsibility for public weal is combined with an Eisenacher tradition of public responsibility for individual welfare—the "entitlements" of American parlance—the double strain on the tax base can become distressing and, in Europe, it has become that. In spite of its rhetoric, Europe's current conservatism is not actually antisocialist. The basic idea of public responsibility for public weal is not brought into question. Even Mrs. Thatcher would not dream of withdrawing subsidies from the British Railways, as Mr. Reagan appears ready to do with Amtrak. It is, however, distinctly anti-Eisenach. It is public responsibility for private weal that appears questionable, even to a great many people who have traditionally voted social democratic. Reagan's domestic policies tend to appear as what they would be in Europe, a corrective for what is perceived as an imbalance between the Lassallean and the Eisenacher emphasis, and they find a good deal of approval, even if not always understanding.

IV

Foreign policy is a different matter. European pronouncements on foreign policy can be as pompously obnoxious as the worst Washington has produced in the past four years—it is gratifying to discover that the arrogance of ignorance is not a Washington monopoly after all. Still, even where they are most knowledgeable, European statements of foreign policy reflect the ambiguity of Europe's own position. The Soviet Union here is not a distant threat but a next-door neighbor. Unlike most Americans, Europeans generally do not labor under the illusion that Soviet armies are safely tucked away somewhere in "eastern" Europe. They know that those armies are poised at the very heart of Europe, far beyond what by any stretch of the most flexible imagination could be considered the Russian borders. The unoccupied littoral is viable only thanks to the American defensive umbrella, and its prosperity could vanish at a stroke if the American presence were to become either too weak to discourage the Soviets from, or so strong as to provoke them to, a preemptive strike, military or economic.

Hence the ambiguity of European pronouncements. It is not a matter of America—yes or no. Not even West European Communists—who love their affluence every bit as much as their Christian Democratic brethren—could desire to be included in the Greater Soviet Co-Prosperity Sphere. The example of Poland is too visible here. *The question is only one of the balance at which American strength ceases to be protective and becomes provocative.* It is hard to avoid the impression that, in their heart of hearts, most Europeans wish that Mr. Reagan would arm to the teeth—but like him to say nothing about it, to avoid provoking the Soviets. It is the contradiction between a desire for a powerful America and a desire for an inoffensive one that makes European foreign policy debates such exercises in futility.

That ambiguity, though, is a matter not just of European perspectives but of European political reality. For some 40 years now Europe has been divided right down the middle, where the armies halted at the end of the Second World War. In the immediate postwar years, that arrangement might have had some justification. Europe lay in ruins. There were only two powers. Each took a responsibility for half the ruins. Forty years later, though, that arrangement has become hopelessly anachronistic, and the periodic upheavals in central Europe make the point. The dividing line along the Elbe is simply completely artificial. The attempts to stabilize it, whether by arming or by disarming, are inevitably futile. Forty years after the war's end, the time has long since come to sign a peace treaty with Germany, to withdraw all foreign armies, and to let Europe be Europe.

That is today as obvious as it has long been unmentionable. For years, each of the great powers nurtured a hope that if it could only sustain the division of Europe long enough, the other side would grow weary and withdraw. Soviet foreign policy hoped for an American weakening, leaving the Soviet-occupied half of Europe solidly in Soviet hands while transforming the American-linked half

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into a "finlandized" buffer zone. The Americans nurtured the opposite dream, of "western" Europe firmly in the American fold and Soviet-occupied Europe transformed into a neutral, finlandized buffer zone. So the futile confrontation persisted. The passing years have, however, made it obvious that neither scenario is likely to be acted out. Nor will the division become viable. The confrontation can only continue until a final conflict. Unless . . .

That is the unmentionable option brought to the forefront by two rather unlikely sources. On the one hand, Gorbachev floated a trial balloon in his first speech, mentioning the possibility of a peace treaty with Germany. At the very opposite end of the spectrum, the much persecuted dissident movement in Czechoslovakia, Charta 77, released a document, ostensibly a letter to one of the periodic "Peace" congresses due to meet in Holland, calling for a German peace treaty and the withdrawal of all foreign armies from Europe.

The reaction to Mr. Gorbachev's trial balloon remained hidden behind the walls of the Kremlin, but he did not mention the topic again. The reaction to the Charta 77 document was predictable: the signers were promptly detained by the police—while in the West the press, which normally gives them a rather complete coverage, passed over the document in silence. The topic is still too sensitive. While both sides have come to recognize the need for a *cordon sanitaire*, each continues to hope that it can be constituted solely out of territory currently occupied by the other.

And, of course, it cannot. No American or German government could possibly agree to a neutralization of Western Germany if a powerful Soviet expeditionary force continues to be poised at Germany's very heart. Nor can any Soviet government ever entertain the possibility of a neutralized "eastern" Germany while a powerful German-American force remains stationed just across the Elbe. That would leave Europe divided, only shifting the dividing line in one direction or the other, and that simply is not acceptable. Only all of traditional Europe, from the Bug to the Atlantic, from Poland to Portugal, is strong enough to provide a reliable buffer. The division of Europe has fueled the arms race for 40 years. It is high time to sign a peace treaty with Germany, withdraw all foreign troops, and let Europe work out its own salvation.

I believe that, unless the world blows itself up first, this is indeed the likely course. Not, to be sure, overnight. It seems far more likely that the German peace treaty will be signed to celebrate the 50th rather than the 40th anniversary of the war's end. Still, it is the only viable alternative to a confrontation that in the end can only blow us sky high, and the Charta 77 document, for all its artless form, openly acknowledged it. The cat is out of the bag: the division of Europe cannot be stabilized, it can only be abolished. The decolonization of Europe must come: without it, there can only be nonwar, not peace.

V

THIS IS THE SHORT-RANGE PROBLEM, perhaps for one generation. Yet if it can be resolved, the long-range question will remain: can Europe preserve its distinctive cultural pattern of the urban civilization that it once exported to all the world—or will it, too, be swallowed up by the urban sprawl that has spread throughout the Third World? That affects the future of humankind no less, since the pedestrian *polis* amid a rural countryside creates a unique possibility for human growth. Will Europe now follow America along the Third World pattern?

Ten years ago, it seemed painfully likely and, ironically, for the best of reasons. The Second World War left Europe with its self-confidence shattered. Not only did the nightmare of nazism arise out of its vaunted cultural tradition but, worse still, Europe could not muster the spiritual resources to counter it. The Munich Agreement was an acknowledgment of Europe's moral bankruptcy. It was the Americans who came to the rescue. Young, naive, self-confident, they appeared as the heirs of Europe's lost youth, of the bright vision of liberty and justice for all that had once been Europe's heritage. They sat on their tanks, so full of life and confidence, chewing gum and licking ice cream cones! No self-respecting European soldier would be caught with an ice-cream cone: soldiers drink beer and play the accordion. But Europe was morally bankrupt and knew it. If Americans chewed gum and put their feet up on tables, who was to fault them? America gave back to Europe what Europe had lost—and, in the postwar years, Europeans, while grumbling, tended to accept uncritically what America had to offer, liberty, justice, chewing gum, tail-fins and all.

That, though, has been changing. Slowly, Europe is becoming aware that it, too, has preserved something precious that America is losing. Ironically, it was not the decay of the cities but the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

devastation of the countryside, no less a product of the automobile-based sprawl, that shook Europe's earlier conviction that the American pattern was the wave of the future. Vienna, which 10 years ago was building suburban clusters, is investing in the inner city. And the unthinkable has happened: the province of Vorarlberg has imposed a 60-mile speed limit on its insolent chariots. Slowly, pedestrians are reclaiming the city. Whether the city as we have once known it in Boston and New York can reemerge from the all-dissolving sprawl seems problematic. Here, though, it is alive and well, the Boston we have once known—and it is not at all an anachronism. Irrationally, it gives me hope that, a generation or two from now, the Eisenhower-Reagan episode might appear not as America's Third World turn but as its Third World episode. It is a consummation devoutly to be desired. □

George Packer

Togo: The Dictator's New Clothes

LOMÉ — Vendors crowd the unpaved streets of Lomé, selling Seiko watches and unpackaged socks. One of them, a small, barefoot boy, hawks a comic book called *Il y avait une fois . . . Eyadema*—"Once Upon a Time . . . Eyadema." On the book's glossy color cover, against a background of village scenes, battles, and parades, the face of its hero stands out under a military cap: the coal-black, unsmiling face, eyes slightly dull and ill-at-ease, of Togo's president, Etienne Gnassingbé Eyadema.

The eager salesboy opens the comic book and flips through its pages. A series of cartoons tells of the president's simple life as a village boy; how the scowling, square-jawed French killed his father; how on January 13, 1963, as a sergeant, he bravely shot Togo's first president, the evil Olympio, trying to climb a wall into the American embassy; how on the same day four years later, as a lieutenant-colonel, he toppled the corrupt new government and took power; how today, as general, he continues to rule in peace and justice. Climactic moments punctuate the tale—Eyadema pardons a would-be assassin, Eyadema emerges from the flaming wreck of his plane, as an onlooker exclaims in French, "Zut! He's alive!" The boy closes the book and tries to bargain the price.

The comic book is a token of the political life of this tiny West African country, sandwiched in between Ghana and Nigeria, where I lived for almost two years. Its leader displays himself in a collage of heroic images; its short history is a manipulable fairy tale. The peasants and teachers among whom I lived in a mud-hut village in the southern hills accepted the tale as readily as the boy selling it on the coastal capital's streets. Togo is a tropical backwater with only one major road and electricity in a handful of towns, but for 18 years General Eyadema has kept himself constantly in the public eye and ear, blending a mythic aura, ideas stolen from here and there, and force. He wears various political costumes, utters contradictory slogans.

Most African countries have adopted one foreign ideology or another, but Togo's Eyadema changes his shape as often as Proteus. National tourist posters call it *"L'Afrique en miniature"* because Togo has both tropical and savannah re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gions. Politically, too, with its confusion of borrowed identities, Togo is a small image of the continent, lately decolonized, now adrift.

II

I SAW EYADEMA ONCE, in my first few weeks when I was still at a Peace Corps training center. He had appeared at a military base nearby, and afterward his motorcade cruised into town and wound its way through the hills above. We heard a siren and rushed to the gate to look down at the road. A few police cars flashed by, and seconds later two Mercedes, followed by a black convertible, top down—and standing in the back seat, in a double-breasted suit, Eyadema. Seeing a band of cheering Americans, for a moment his stern face broke into a smile. He waved. The motorcade rushed by. In the middle of the bush, on a muddy road lined with banana trees and crumbling huts where little goats scurried out of the way, an African president appeared like John F. Kennedy, a mirage of Western power.

In the middle of Lomé another mirage appears. The city's quarter-million people inhabit a sprawl of shacks along dirt roads, with a patch of modern buildings and pavement downtown. But near the commercial center, the Hotel 2 Février rises 37 stories up into the humid air. Nothing nearby is more than a few stories high. Alone in a huge empty parking lot, the luxury hotel imposes a skyscraper's steel and glass on a shantytown where chickens share the road with taxis. Uniformed doormen stand idle outside. Only three or four floors are ever occupied, since tourism and business bring in just a trickle of visitors; the tower's upper floors are as empty and silent as the asphalt desert below. Eyadema built the 2 Février a few years ago with French investment when he hoped the Organization of African Unity would take up quarters in Lomé. It didn't, and now the Togolese government and the French backers lose millions of African francs every day. Still, any resident will proudly point it out, visible from miles away, as a sign of Togo's development.

In the parking lot's center, atop a pedestal on a green knoll, stands a 20-foot bronze statue of General Eyadema. Dressed in an officer's uniform and beaked cap, feet apart, face unsmiling but benign, he extends an open hand toward the lot. The image presides like a giant idol over the new complex, and the hand gestures to invisible throngs that the hotel, the ministries with their gold-tinted windows, the glittering convention hall of the single party that Eyadema founded—all are his. In its deserted landscape, the rain-stained bronze is Togo's Statue of Liberty, but it commemorates the man who has real power: running the country, Eyadema has become the country.

What little official information there is, with illiteracy at 80–90 percent, he monopolizes. One paper, *La Nouvelle Marche* (the New Course), comes out daily in Lomé, 10 or 12 badly printed tabloid pages, and reaches the northern savannah a few days later. A congratulatory letter from Eyadema to another head of state on that country's national holiday makes headlines, affirming Togo's warm friendship—even if that country is hostile, like Benin next door. This sort of "news" story relegates the real news of African wars and the dire state of the economy to distortion in the inside pages, or to oblivion.

III

MENTION OF EYADEMA at the top of a story requires five lines alone, for day after day he is "President of the Republic, General of the Army, Minister of Defense, His Excellency Gnassingbé Eyadema." The titles return throughout the story, along with such heroic epithets as "the Man of Peace," "the Man of January 13," or "the Father of the Country" (rewriting history, for in fact while Olympio lobbied the U.N. for independence from France, Eyadema was fighting in the French Foreign Legion against Algerian rebels). His equivalent in America would be George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Ronald Reagan, and Caspar Weinberger—all in one large-sized pair of shoes.

His face, and only his, appears everywhere. There are no other public figures. At the convention hall of the Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais (RPT), Togo's only political party, you can buy a watch whose face shows that of Eyadema fading in and out as the second hand sweeps past each quarter-minute. In every restaurant, hotel, school, even the Lebanese shops, from the capital to the most remote town in the savannah, his picture is displayed—either the earlier one, shown on the comic book's cover, or the newer black-and-white close-up, smiling in his business suit, more confident and plumper. The recent photo hangs off the mezzanine balcony in the cavernous lobby of the 2 Février, a 10-by-10-foot blowup staring down on guests. His name is no less ubiquitous—on Eyadema schools, stadiums, T-shirts. The repe-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tition of name and face mesmerizes like the chant of a new national myth.

IV

THE MYTH CENTERS on one event, the plane crash, which every Togolese over the age of five or six knows about. In early 1974, the country had a dispute with France over the nationalization of Togo's phosphate plant: France wanted to retain partial interest, but Eyadema hedged. On January 24 his private plane crashed near the village of Sarakawa. The pilot and others died, but Eyadema emerged—as the comic book glowingly depicts—unscathed. When he made his triumphal return to Lomé on February 2, he was hailed, like Caesar returned from Gaul, as a demigod. The government accused the French of sabotage, nationalized the plant, and named January 24 "Economic Liberation Day." Today tourists can visit the burned-out shell of the plane beside a museum, to which a paved road has been built through the local millet fields.

The president's survival testified to his status as someone greater than a man, endowed with a power more magical than human. In shooting Olympio he had proved his human strength; with the survival of the Sarakawa crash he became divine. The lore of the event permeates national life, from yearly celebrations and song lyrics to the names of Lomé's luxury hotels: the second-best in town is called the Sarakawa, and the first, of course, is the 2 Février. (The French, from whom the Togolese economy is no more "liberated" today than in 1974, now make up the clientele of the hotels; and when François Mitterrand visited Lomé on January 13, 1983, he was received, if not like Caesar, at least as a Pompey.)

If the story of the crash seems mythic in a Roman way, much of Eyadema's imagery has been borrowed from a source slightly closer to home—Mobutu Sese Seko, the president of Zaire. Mobutu's idea of "authenticity," that in an African country things should be African, has been duplicated in Togo—now everyone must use an African first name in public, which explains the piece of tape fixed to all the pictures of Eyadema in all the shops and restaurants and schools: it blocks out "Etienne" in the name beneath the photograph. Now he is, authentically, just "Gnassingbé" Eyadema. The government supports traditional festivals, like the Kabyé tribe's ritual wrestling tournament during seven days in the northern village of Evala, on which the president descends by helicopter. A foreign dignitary might be treated to a voodoo ceremony by an official fetish priest at the presidential palace, hosted by the all-powerful Chief.

The highlight of authenticity is "animation," another import from Zaire. In schools and at political rallies, especially on January 13 and 24, students and the youth wing of the RPT, *militants animateurs*, perform synchronized dances and sing French lyrics: "*Heureux le peuple Togolais*," "*Merci, merci, Gnassingbé.*" State propaganda turns old religious practices into the new religion of Eyadema's reign. But "animation" does not quite have the authenticity of a village funeral, a social occasion in which everyone participates, taking turns to dance to rhythmic drums inside the circle of dancers; "animation," with its sweet pop melodies, is rehearsed, and watched by an approved audience at the airport where the president will arrive, the convention hall where he will speak. And the *animateurs'* dress is only half-authentic: from the waist down they wear traditional loincloths, but their T–shirts—like the comic book, the watches, the shop portraits—show the face of Eyadema.

His rule, in its various forms, has become inevitable, his will and goodness as unquestionable as a father's to young children. Rule by personality cult has the advantage over sheer dictatorial force: it appeals to affection as well as fear, and part of Eyadema's success in surviving (the first priority of any dictator) is that he has not been as ruthless as other African autocrats. His Kabyé tribe hasn't massacred the rival Ewe, unlike Robert Mugabe's Shona in the Ndebele part of Zimbabwe; the army hasn't run amok in the bush, unlike that of Uganda. Eyadema's corruption is in scale with the size of the country, it is not gluttonous. Mobutu has made himself one of the world's richest men in a dirt-poor land, but Eyadema, though hardly ascetic, has a smaller appetite. The steel skeleton of his new villa, looming on a hill over his tiny home village aside the Route Nationale, stood half-built throughout my two years, a road sign not just of harsh economic conditions but of Eyadema's relative even-handedness. When a whale was spotted he flew out over the Gulf of Guinea in a helicopter and machine-gunned her as a hunting trophy—a petty corruption. He is an African hero-chief in a business suit, but not vicious. War and genocide are two ideas he has not borrowed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EYADEMA, of course, is not above the more common methods of dictators. There is no free speech whatsoever, not even the whiff of an opposition. Only after months of friendship would Togolese dare speak to me about politics, in strict privacy with voices lowered. The referenda of '72 and '79, in which he won 99 percent and 100 percent approval, saw soldiers at polling places and an open ballot of two cards—one color for Yes and one for No. Amnesty International reports frequent detention without trial of suspected "opponents," and state torture is less than authentically African—electric shocks. One student who refused to join the RPT was held for eight years and died shortly after his release. After the triennial coup "attempt" has been put down, a few suspects are put on trial in the State Security Court, convicted on meager evidence, and forgotten for years in a jail without light, air, or decent food. A few have been executed.

Eyadema's Togo is a country that would be totalitarian if it had the means; but without electricity, access to the bush, and a large army and well-trained police, it falls short of absolute control (perhaps this qualifies it, in the current jargon, as "authoritarian"—a totalitarian country with kerosene lamps).

The local governor once came to give a speech at the school where I taught, around the time the government announced the suppression of a coup plot. Classes were canceled for three days for rehearsals; when he trundled onto the grounds in his chauffeured Peugeot, students danced "animation," and then assembled in obedient rows on the grass. Standing under a palm-frond shelter, the governor warned them to denounce dissent wherever they heard it: at school, among friends, in the family. New ideas, he said, were always welcome, but only within the walls of the RPT—the primitive disorder before the salvation by Eyadema must never overtake the country again. Togo had its own democracy, it didn't need the democracy of foreigners. And at the end, lowering his voice and staring at the uniformed students in the fierce midday sun, he added: "As for the possibility of dissent among any of you—well, great pain would lie in store for you, and you would be sure never to make this village your happy home again." One shouldn't forget that the "Father of Togo" shot his way into paternity.

Underneath his clothes—whether the Western president's, the mythic hero's, or the African chief's—Eyadema is, naked, a dictator. Yet he demands nothing of the Togolese except attendance at the annual political fetes and applause when his name is uttered in public. Students sing how "lucky" the country is, old men tune ancestral chants to new hymns of thanks to their "liberator." But these are easy words, symbols of obedience. Once villagers have taken care of the superficial signs, they are left alone. Eyadema has not published a little red or green book of sayings, "Eyademism" isn't taught at the university. He has no ideology to impose.

The regime's garb is patchwork. "Authenticity" came from Mobutu. But the black Mercedes and double-breasted suit that appeared on the muddy bush road were Western; Togo receives development money from the U.S., while the French train the army. And although Togo is bordered by two pro-Soviet states, the paper makes no reference to "Communist infiltrators"—in fact, Eyadema has close ties with Kim Il Sung of North Korea. More than once I saw a boy in a taxi station peddling works of Marx and Engels alongside the oranges and peanuts. *La Nouvelle Marche* provides the obligatory slogan, "La Révolution Togolaise"—yet the wife of a French businessman shops in Lomé's elegant store and carps at the slow cashier; her children attend the Ecole Française; her husband does a good business to the benefit of nobody but himself and his French company, and doesn't even bother to close the office on Economic Liberation Day. The Europeans' houses and businesses are not confiscated as they were in Uganda and Zaire, nor do the Lebanese shopkeepers on the ocean front have to worry that this week's radio will announce a "radical, authentic action," meaning forced exodus. Eyadema demands African first names, but the shops stay in Lebanese hands.

Democratic, Communist, revolutionary, authentic: the slogans, like the political costumes, mean very little. Togo is all things to all people, as mutable as the chameleons that scuttle in the bush. When Eyadema writes to Mobutu in the paper, he uses the Zairean's preferred title, "Citoyen"; Kim is "Comrade"; on Mitterrand's parade route, signs proclaimed "RPT—Socialist party: Same Objective, Same Ideal." Public life is an elaborate ritual of contradictions in which everyone agrees to play along. Eyadema tells the people they are happy, and they won't say he's wrong—Togolese politics doesn't go beyond this balance. Caught between a dying past and a dangerous future, between Afri-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can soil and Western building, and between the two hungry superpowers, Eyadema's Togo reflects them all and has no real face of its own.

If Eyadema is the "Father" of Togo, the people are politically his children. Politics is a story told in a comic book that a little boy vends. Cheerfulness about public issues and a willingness to wear the Eyadema blazon defined the awareness of nearly everyone I knew. A peasant muttering against the government complained of bad crops, and not denial of freedom or corruption. Nor were the educated immune to naïveté. Teachers limited their dissent to the government's latest order that they leave their female students alone. Functionaries preached the state gospel far more readily than farmers, in part because they knew it better but mainly because anyone with a job has something to protect and owes a kind of debt to the state and its ruler, and pays back in fear and loyalty. When news came of political turmoil in the Upper Volta to the north, a teacher told me, "That's why all of Togo prays for General Eyadema. As long as he lives we have peace." Those who have something are too afraid of losing it in the maelstrom of African life to oppose the government; and those with nothing are too busy toiling their supper out of the soil to think of the government at all. Even when the villagers gathered in a clearing between huts for "animation" on January 13, and listened to 12-year-olds mangle the French slogans, they took pleasure in the drums, dance, communal energy. The fete's political content was incidental, a song whose words they didn't know. Beneath the Eyadema shirts they were farmers, market women, and small children, enjoying life together.

To the villagers I lived with, the regime was always there, an accepted fate like malaria or drought. Every now and then it intruded on their lives, in the form of a drop in the price paid for farmers' cocoa or a speech by a functionary. But villagers wanted to be left in peace, and so they accepted the price cut, they listened to the speech, they didn't ask questions. "*Pas d'histoires*," one taxi driver painted on the side of his van: "No stories—no trouble." Better to mind the family and the fields, and leave politics to the crazy men who want to touch it and get burned.

V

YET FOR A FEW YOUNG PEOPLE I KNEW, it is becoming difficult to keep their hands out of the fire. More and more Togolese spend years making the hard journey through school and university, while washing dishes and studying under lampposts, only to find on receiving their degree that no job awaits them—not even a remote post miles from a paved road. The economy, along with that of almost every other African nation, is in ruins, the national debt huge, the job market shrunk to nothing. The university continues to confer degrees upon the few who survive the educational system, but many of them end up jobless on the malarial streets of Lomé—lucky to have part-time work giving French lessons, hustling to find a position as their scholarship money runs out.

When a friend of mine couldn't find work and grew desperate, he wrote to another West African government and was told he would have a teaching job if he went. Kwamé sent, as requested, his papers and degree. A week later the police summoned him to the local *gendarmerie*. They had intercepted his letter and confiscated his documents. They gave them back to him and sent him away, with a warning: no one leaves Togo without permission.

Kwamé is near wit's end. He cannot leave—he says the government fears opposition abroad—but he has nothing to stay for. He idles his time away, makes money as he can, tries not to despair. He has been educated to the ears, and 16 years in school have cleft him from the familiar life of his village. Now the promise of that sacrifice has been broken, and he's trapped in Lomé with a headful of knowledge and nowhere to go. He must wonder if it wouldn't have been better never to have left the fields.

There are many Kwamés rotting away in the capital—victims of the contradiction in what Eyadema has done for Togo. "Development" is the watchword all over Africa—the one word, whatever it may mean, that everyone agrees is good. When Eyadema built the Université du Benin in Lomé he declared it a proud step for Togo's development. But in a country where any idea not originating within "the walls of the RPT" is snuffed out, the intellectuals produced by the university have no use for their minds. They become bureaucratic bolts and fixtures, duly carrying out the borrowed ideas of the one man who can speak. And when even that opening is closed to them, as to Kwamé, they become offal.

Besides the human suffering, this situation is becoming the only internal threat to the regime—a class of educated, alienated young people. Kwamé

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the hundreds like him, educated youth to whom much had been promised, now unwanted by their society and unable to leave, seem the only hope for change from within Togo. Already in Lomé you begin to smell, along with women's cooking oil, the fetid air of discontent.

But revolution is not at hand. Eyadema's protean reign, as much as his repressiveness, makes him a difficult target for revolt. He may well rule for another 18 years, provided the French and Americans don't decide that he is no longer in their interest and stage a successful Sarakawa. African governments have never changed because of genuine revolution. A handful of middle-level officers assassinate the president, seize the radio tower, execute ministers after show trials, and declare a revolution; they have only added another coup d'état to Africa's endless list. Meanwhile the vast majority of villagers in whose name the "revolution" was staged continue to break their backs in the fields, looking up one day to find their children must now have new names and the "animation" songs have changed.

The average Togolese, whether peasants who hoe their yam field or teachers who complain about their bush post, don't yet have a political consciousness. Until they do, there can be no democracy in Togo. For them the government remains a fact of life, like rainfall (though much less important). Some seasons the rain is good, other seasons sparse, but each year whatever it is has to be lived with. It would be foolish to throw down your cutlass and stop farming altogether, for then you'd only go hungry. Western leftists who long for the outbreak of Third World revolutions may have to wait years for the spectacle of throngs in the empty lot below the 2 Février pulling down the bronze image to cries of "Liberté! Mort à Eyadema!" And when it does crash to the asphalt desert, it will probably be replaced by another statue, another embodiment of the people in one hero; a different face, perhaps, but the same extended hand. □

The Poor in Thatcher's England

Who are the poor? The government estimated that there were, in 1981, 15 million people with very low incomes, including those with very low incomes, including those with lower incomes than the state poverty line, those with incomes only marginally above. Nearly 6 million of these were people of pensionable age (nearly 2 million of whom were also disabled), nearly 4 million were in families dependent on those in full-time work, over 2½ million were in families of unemployed people, nearly 2 million were members of the families of single parents, and rather less than a million were disabled people under pensionable age and their dependents. Counted in these various categories were over 3½ million children, half of them in working families.

The use of the adjective "mass" before poverty is therefore justified—even on the basis of the state's own threshold definition of low incomes. The numbers in the categories I have described have doubled, from 7¾ million to 15 million in 20 years under successive governments but have accelerated in the last five years. Between 1979 and 1981 the total increased from just over 11 million to 15 million—or by nearly 4 million—and there is no discernable halt to that trend. Since 1981 long-term unemployment has increased substantially, and so have the numbers of people obliged to resort to supplementary benefit (from less than 5 million to substantially over 7 million). Instead of 15 million poor the total could now be 18 million.

•

From *Why are the Many Poor?* by Peter Townsend, Fabian Society Pamphlet #500 □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Michael Harrington and Mark Levinson

The Perils of a Dual Economy

A Growing Trend in the American Occupational Structure

In the wake of the economic recovery in 1983–84, a kind of euphoria spread through some, but by no means all, of the upper reaches of American society. John Naisbitt, author of the widely read book *Megatrends*, wrote at the end of 1984 that "job creation is one of America's great untold stories." Indeed, he predicted that the United States was close to a time of labor shortages.

> With double-digit unemployment still fresh in our minds [Naisbitt conceded], the idea that labor shortages are imminent may be hard to swallow. How can it happen? Quite simply, the labor force is not growing at anywhere near the 2.2 percent annual growth experienced between 1965 and 1979, when most baby boomers entered the work force. Projections are that the labor force will grow by 21 million between 1982 and 1995, to 131 million from 110 million. New jobs are being created at a phenomenal rate—4 million in 1983, probably an equal number in 1984. . . . If job growth continues at the current rate, there still will be more jobs created than there are workers to fill them.[1]

In criticizing Naisbitt's analysis, we will focus not on the extremely optimistic assumptions about economic growth, which undergird it, but rather on the character of the jobs generated in the past, present, and future. We note, however, that the Department of Labor's projections, which yield a labor force of 131 million in 1995, assume even in the most moderate of three scenarios that GNP growth will outpace both the 1973–77 and 1977–82 rates in the low scenario. These projections envision a 2.8 percent growth rate in 1982–90 and a 2.7 percent pace in 1990–95, as against 2.2 percent in 1973–77 and 1.6 percent in 1977–82.[2]

We also will not dispute here Naisbitt's, and the Department of Labor's, hopeful economic premises. For we will argue *that, even if those growth rates are achieved, the changing American occupational structure is becoming bifurcated, and that this may create serious difficulties for many working people, as well as for American business.*

The Record of the 1970s

Let us summarize some of the recent shifts in the American occupational structure. In the 11 years between 1970 and 1980, there was an enormous increase in the number of jobs, as the labor force added 23.655 million new participants. This was a 27 percent rise, almost 10 points higher than the rate of increase between 1960 and 1970.[3] In those years, it was not simply the number of people entering the labor force that signaled an important change; the very character of the occupational structure was in profound transition.

Women's labor-force participation was, of course, one of the most striking developments. It went from 36.5 percent in 1960 to 42.6 percent in 1970, to 51.9 percent in 1980. As *Business Week* pointed out in early 1985, fully two-thirds of the jobs created between 1974 and '84 had gone to women. *Business Week* noted that

> when women started flooding into the work force in the early 1970s, the gap [between male and female wages] actually widened. . . . Just as the shift from high-labor-cost manufacturing to low-labor-cost services was gaining momentum, the influx of women provided a cheap pool of labor for business.

This tendency, the article continued, is being

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

somewhat counteracted. The female/male gap was 57 percent in 1973, 64 percent in the early 1980s, and is projected, in one study, to rise to 74 percent of the male wage by the year 2000.[4]

This analysis captures another aspect of the labor-market shift. Women are concentrated in clerical occupations (almost 80 percent of the total), the food and health sectors (60 percent), and sales (near 50 percent). The increase in female labor-force participation is an aspect of the trend toward a new occupational structure with educated and trained people at the top, a middle "sliding" down the wage scale, and a growing population of the marginalized. Most of those "women's jobs" were located in the sliding middle, a point to which we will return.

The blue-collar percentage of employed Americans dropped meanwhile from 35.3 percent in 1970 to 29.7 percent in 1980. The most significant gains in that decade were made at the top, where professional and technical workers increased by 4.8 million, and in the lower wage reaches of the middle, where service workers increased by 3.5 million, sales personnel by 2.84 million, and clericals by 4.7 million. These trends became even more pronounced during the economic recovery of 1982–84.

Granting that the quality of the new jobs generated in the 1970s did not correspond—in terms of either value-added or worker's pay—to that of the postwar boom period, doesn't this trend still stand in stark contrast to the European failure to create new work opportunities? And doesn't this explain why the American unemployment rate, which was normally higher than the European in the 1950s and '60s, is now lower than that of most European countries? (Sweden and Austria are obvious exceptions.)

These points are usually made by people who speak of the success of the American economy in recent years. An analysis by Lester Thurow emphasizes the complexities of these trends.[5]

In the '70s, Thurow points out, American research and development (R&D) fell while Europe's rose. And in the '80s, though U.S. R&D is on the increase, it has not reached European levels. Yet America has generated jobs and Europe has not. Thurow writes:

> The reason for this paradox can be found in the two continents' very different labor markets. Relative to the price of capital, American wages were 37 percent lower in 1983 than in 1972. After correcting for inflation, wages have fallen 6 percent in absolute terms. This has not happened in Europe.

In addition, Thurow continues, there are millions of Americans who work at levels well below the unenforced, legal minimum wage of $3.35, not to mention the average wage of $8.01. It is of some moment that the production workers in high-tech firms commonly labor for around $4 an hour.

"The worst-paid European workers," Thurow concludes, "make much more relative to the average European than the worst-paid American workers make relative to the average American." Under these conditions—the relative cheapness of workers in the United States and their high cost in Europe—the divergence between the two areas becomes quite explicable. Sweden has 13 times as many programmable robots in proportion to the size of its labor force as America, because it makes business sense in that economy to substitute machines for people. The United States had a boom in relatively low-paying jobs in the service sector because employing such workers was a profitable strategy.

There are Europeans who have interpreted these trends as proof of the superior flexibility of the American labor market. In 1984, for instance, the London *Economist* noted that between 1973 and 1982 real earnings for industrial workers in Britain rose by 10 percent while employment declined, and that real earnings dropped in America while employment went up by 16 percent. Part of the solution to the crisis, the *Economist* seemed to say, was that Europe should become more "American."[6]

Leaving aside the blithe disregard for the human and social cost of the American approach, there are economic reasons for being critical of it. In the United States, Thurow notes, management flexibility gives rise to a corresponding labor flexibility, and so the labor turnover rate in the States—4 percent a month—is vastly higher than in Europe. "Firms know employees are apt to leave before the costs of training can be recouped in higher productivity, and employees know that they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

may soon move to other jobs that require very different skills. The result is a much less well-trained labor force."

Thurow thinks that this is one of the reasons for the current crisis in the American machine-tool industry, which lost almost 50 percent of the market to the West Germans, Japanese, and South Koreans during the recovery.[7]

For now, however, we can make a preliminary generalization about the generation of jobs in the 1970s, which was obviously part of the transformation of the American economy from secondary to tertiary activity. Here the tertiary occupations are split into high- and low-wage sectors, with the latter being more numerous than the former. A few selective figures should reinforce this point. Between 1972 and 1982, the number of accountants grew by 473,000, computer specialists by 479,000, engineers by 463,000, engineering and scientific technicians by 279,000. That totals 1.694 million new, well-paid jobs. At the same time, if we look only at the service sector proper, food, cleaning, health, and child-care services rose by 2.548 million jobs.

This analysis is not partisan. A New York Stock Exchange study of job trends in the United States came to empirical conclusions quite similar to ours. The difference is not primarily in the figures but in their interpretation. We are, the Stock Exchange agrees, generating more low-paying than high-paying jobs. But, it comments, "There has always been and probably will always be more people working in the lower-skill, lower-income jobs than in higher-skill, higher-income jobs."[8]

We disagree. In this case, the past is not a guide to the future. In an important study, Wassily Leontiev notes that, during the 19th century, "the 'productivity'—or should one say the 'indispensability'—of labor increased steadily and so did the demand and consequently the price paid for it." But, he says, this process is not taking place in today's technological revolution and, particularly as the service sector is more and more automated, it will occur less and less in the future.[9] All this anticipates a principal analytic proposition that will emerge at the end of this article. For now, we simply note that the New York Stock Exchange analysis coincides with our own regarding the basic trends. Let us now turn to the more recent developments during the recovery of 1983–84.

Job Generation During the 1983–84 Recovery

PRESIDENT REAGAN'S SUPPORTERS argue that the principal reason for his landslide victory in the 1984 election was the extraordinary performance of the American economy in creating new jobs. Even critics of the president tend to be sanguine about the loss of jobs, confident that more and better jobs will be created. They argue that the trends described here are simply part of the process of economic development—a process that results in a shift of employment from agriculture to goods-producing industries and, finally, to services. In the past such growth was closely associated with economic progress and a rise in per capita GNP. Thus James Fallows:

> There are good reasons to believe that today's economic change is very much like past changes that the United States has undergone—and therefore to conclude that it will create many more opportunities than it destroys. . . . Why should we decide that the whole national history of migration, adjustment, and advancement must now come to an end?

There are good reasons to doubt Fallows' optimistic conclusion. In fact later in the same article Fallows seems to recognize this:

> [We] have to come to grips with certain uncomfortable human truths. One is that some—perhaps most—displaced workers will never again be as well off as they used to be. The [displaced worker] will not be filling the new professional slots that computerization will open up.[10]

What, one wonders, will they be doing? Fallows doesn't say. His claim that the current economic transformation will create more opportunities than it destroys requires careful examination. We will begin by looking at where the new jobs appeared and where old jobs disappeared (a point not much stressed by the Administration's supporters). There has been, it would seem, more than a little single-entry bookkeeping—with analyses of new jobs

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in gross terms that don't take into account the loss of existing jobs.

We first take the period from early 1983 to August 1984, utilizing Bureau of Labor Statistics figures for average employment in 1983 and preliminary estimates of employment from August 1984.[11] During that 20-month period, total employment went up by 4.9 million workers, and private-sector employment by 4.8 million. The goods-producing sector accounted for 26.3 percent of the job increase (1.299 million jobs), with a heavy concentration in the durable-goods sector (724,000 openings). But the "service-producing" sector added 3.645 million jobs, or 73.7 percent of the total. The service sector proper (such as food and health) led the way with 1.6 million jobs; retail trade followed with 1.1 million.

What are the wage implications of these trends? The average weekly wage in manufacturing in 1983 was $478.98, in services it was $238.71, and in retail trade $171.05. The consequent yearly wage in retail trade is substantially under the poverty line for a family of four (which was just over $10,000 a year for an urban family of four in 1984), and it was just above that line in the service sector. The yearly manufacturing wage comes out to somewhat more than $24,000, or in the area of U.S. median income. But manufacturing occupations were down and retail and service up.

In short, the trends we have identified in the 1970s are at work in the recovery period of the 1980s—*only more so.* Blue-collar jobs are deteriorating at a rate that will lead to the further proportional decrease of that sector in our economy, and the importance of the low-wage strata, and their problems, is accelerating. The agony of restructuring suffered by these strata was the result of the 1981–82 recession, which had exacerbated the tendencies we have outlined in the previous section.

All the figures we have just cited compare the gross total of workers employed at the

On Analysis and Statistics . . .

In the March 1985 issue of *Monthly Labor Review* Neal H. Rosenthal offers a criticism of the kind of argument we make in this article. We cannot here do justice to the complexity of Rosenthal's analysis nor can we state all of our objections to it. We shall focus only on what we take to be his main argument.

Rosenthal's criticism is based on a procedure that divides 416 occupations into thirds on the basis of 1982 earnings. He then compares employment in 1973 for each occupation in the same order as in 1982, and he calculates the 1973 distribution for each third. Comparing the distribution in 1973 with 1982, Rosenthal shows that the percentage of workers in the top third has increased significantly, the middle third has declined slightly, and the bottom third has not seen an increase but a drop.

Rosenthal then argues that the occupational structure in 1995 will, on the basis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data, resemble that of 1982. He concedes that there have been losses in some of the well-paying smokestack industries but holds that they are not significant in the total employment picture and, in any case, the disappearance of low-paid jobs (textiles, apparel, and leather) have offset any impact that auto and steel might have on the composition of the labor force. The fastest growing jobs, Rosenthal argues, are to be found in fairly skilled occupations, such as computer-service technicians and legal assistants. Finally, Rosenthal concludes that while previous analyses showing increasing inequality and polarization between the 1960s and mid-'70s seem to be correct, his work regarding the decade 1973–82 indicates that there will not be a bifurcation in the labor market in the future.

To begin with, Rosenthal is right: the occupational shifts are often more complex than some have suggested, and one must take into account the disappearance of low-paid as well as of high-paid jobs. However, his basic argument is seriously flawed in several ways.

(1) There is the method of dividing occupations into thirds on the basis of the wages and salaries of occupations rather then on the basis of people or income. This procedure does not take into account the significant increase in unearned income that is a major part of the argument about the sliding middle. Rosenthal's analysis ignores the fact that the wage portion of national income fell from 63 percent in 1978 to 59.8 percent in 1984, while interest income rose from 10.3 percent to 14.4 percent. (Calculated from Table B–22, Report of the Council of Economic Advisers, 1985, pp. 258–59.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

beginning and end of a time period. As a result, there is little sense of what happens to individuals during that period. A special study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in late 1984 gets somewhat more concrete.[12]

The study looked at 5.1 million workers whose jobs were abolished or plants shut down between January 1979 and January 1984. These workers had been at their jobs for at least three years before they were discharged. Almost half of the jobs that were permanently ended were in manufacture, most of them in durable-goods production. Retail trade accounted for less than 10 percent of the losses and services for about 10 percent. So the logic of job disappearance is the mirror image of job generation. In the former the losses are primarily in manufacture; in the latter the gains are mainly in the service-producing sector.

Another familiar factor—economic geography—is also quite visible in the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) analysis. The heaviest job losses were suffered in the Atlantic seaboard areas and parts of the industrial Midwest, which accounted for about half of the lost jobs. The Southeast and Southwest, the Mountain States, and the Pacific areas were much less affected.

What happened to these workers after their jobs disappeared? In January 1984, 60.1 percent of them had found other jobs, 25.5 percent were still unemployed, and 14.4 percent had left the labor force. But the men and women who had found new jobs had often been subjected to the "sliding" phenomenon—had been reemployed at a wage that was lower than the one they had earned before. For example, 27.4 percent of them were receiving 20 percent or even less of their previous pay; now 14 percent were below their old wage but not by more than 20 percent; 25 percent were above their old wage by 20 percent or less; and 23 percent had found a substantially better (by more than 20 percent) job. These percentages, however, are

(2) Rosenthal's procedure also results in some very suspect categories. For example, the income spread in the top third stretches from $20,020 a year to $40,820, a range that is greater than the difference between the lowest pay of the bottom third and the highest pay of the middle third. In 1982, the median income for full-time workers was $22,352—that is, more than half of the income in the United States is to be found in the top third of the highest-paid occupations. As Rosenthal sets up the problem, significant shifts of the declining middle are hidden because they take place *within* that sprawling upper third.

(3) Rosenthal compares a relatively good base year, 1973, when unemployment was 4.8 percent, to 1982, the worst employment year since the Great Depression. The almost 11 percent officially unemployed in the latter year included a significant number of workers who were in marginal jobs. Ironically, in years of high joblessness those with jobs do fairly well, and an analysis of the *employed* thus paints a darker reality in a rosy light. When one uses a year of high unemployment as the base year for computing future trends, there is no way to go but up, and the rates of job growth into the future are an artifact with a dismal starting point.

(4) Rosenthal's account of the future is also open to serious question. Some 49 percent of the professional and technical workers whose increase is cited as a good omen made less than $19,968 in 1982—they were located in the middle and the bottom thirds and were paid about $2,500 less than the 1982 median income. Furthermore, in the Bureau of Labor Statistics analysis of employment projections 6 of the 10 occupations that will increase most by 1995 are relatively low-paid (building superintendents, cashiers, office clerks, sales clerks, waiters and waitresses, nursing aides and orderlies). They will account for 15.5 percent of the total job increase in all jobs between 1982 and 1995. The three computer jobs on the list of the 40 fastest growing occupations (computer-systems analysts, computer programmers, computer operations) will add 2 percent to total employment. But Rosenthal focuses on percentage increases in jobs rather than on their actual growth. The number of computer programmers, he emphasizes, will increase at a 76.9 percent rate between now and 1995. But that, the BLS analysis tells us, will add only 8 tenths of 1 percent to the job total in that period, or less than a third of the projected increase for building custodians.

If the reader has followed us through this maze, our point is clear: Rosenthal's argument is anything but definitive and, in the use of statistical data about the future, quite unpersuasive. — M. H. & M. L. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

computed on the basis of those who had found full-time jobs. If one adds the 39.9 percent who are still unemployed or just left the work force, *the loss of income affected about 59 percent of the more than 5 million workers whose jobs had disappeared.*

A study by Michael Urquhart complements this analysis.[13] Urquhart found that new employees in the service sector are twice as likely not to have worked at all in the previous year than to have been employed in the goods-producing sector. So the employment shift to services *does not* essentially stem from an actual migration of workers from one sector to another, but rather results from the expansion of the labor force and especially the increasing participation of women.

For a variety of technical reasons, the BLS study does not focus on office workers (the disappearance of manufacturing jobs is somewhat easier to define). In a *Business Week* analysis, the white-collar problem was put into focus. As a consequence of the decline in smokestack industries, it reported, a million white-collar (clerical and managerial) employees have lost their jobs. Since 1979, the numbers of steel-industry personnel of this type have declined by 40 percent, of auto personnel by 15 percent. Some of those let go find better jobs, but, as quoted in the BLS study, *Business Week* said that 34 percent of these people had to take pay cuts.[14]

These qualifications do not suggest that the recovery was a sham. We simply argue that the evolution of the American occupational structure is not as dynamic as some of President Reagan's more enthusiastic supporters suggest. But, more central to our analysis, the recent recovery has accelerated the shift to services that had become so visible in the '70s. What about the middle-range future?

TABLE 1
Occupations with Largest Job Growth 1982–95

Occupation	Percent of Total Job Growth
Building Custodians	3.0
Cashiers	2.9
Secretaries	2.8
General Clerks, office	2.7
Salesclerks	2.7
Nurses, registered	2.5
Waiters and waitresses	2.2
Teachers, kindergarten and elementary	2.0
Truckdrivers	1.7
Nursing aides and orderlies	1.7
Total:	24.2

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Projections for 1995," Bulletin # 2147, March 1984, p. 43.

The Future of Jobs in the United States

WE SHALL RELY PRIMARILY here on two analyses of the job future in the American economy, both of them previously cited (see Notes 2 and 8): *Employment Projections for 1995,* published in March 1984 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (hereafter BLS), and *U.S. International Competitiveness: Perception and Reality*, published in 1984 by the New York Stock Exchange (hereafter NYSE).

Projections about 1995 are obviously very chancy, for one must make assumptions about the economic future—about such matters as growth and unemployment rates, and prices—which are extremely difficult to establish in terms of next year, and even more so of the next decade. Thus the BLS "moderate" scenario assumes "stable economic growth through the mid-1990s" and expects productivity to do significantly better than in the 1973–79 period (when it declined compared to the '60s). Indeed, it is hypothesized that the '80s and the first half of the '90s will resemble the '60s in terms of productivity gains.

The Stock Exchange is, as one might expect, even more bullish. It anticipates 3.5 percent real growth in GNP per year between 1982 and 1995, with productivity rising by 2.2 percent. "These are fairly optimistic projections and some may be skeptical . . . ," the Exchange notes. In other contexts, we would strongly argue that these surprise-free and very optimis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tic projections are profoundly flawed. But for the analysis of our future occupational structure, *even if these excessively hopeful projections were to come true, our basic case would still stand.* We take the BLS and Stock Exchange scenarios, then, as the limit of the most optimistic expectations. And if, as we think likely, the American economy does much less well than those two studies assume, our somewhat pessimistic account of the shape of the labor force at century's end will be all the more compelling. See Table 1.

The 10 top growth jobs on this list will account for 24.2 percent of the total employment increase projected for 1995. Three categories—noncollege teachers, registered nurses, and truck drivers—are in the "middle" of American society in terms of remuneration. There are very few classic blue-collar jobs on the list and most of the occupations predicted to grow are nonunion. Indeed, this projection puts the trends we have described here at the core of the 1995 reality: the growth of some well-paid professional and technical occupations (accountants, engineers, physicians, lawyers) and a large number of poorly paid service occupations (cashiers, salesclerks, kitchen helpers, and so on).

The Stock Exchange projections differ on a number of counts from those of the BLS, but the occupational universe described is essentially the same. The differences have to do, one suspects, with the job classifications used; for instance, machine-tool operators and metalworking craftsmen, which are 29 and 31 on the projected 1995 list in the Stock Exchange study, are not even found in the top 40 jobs of the BLS study. The Stock Exchange study also uses much more optimistic assumptions.

These conceptual problems can be seen in the Stock Exchange's valiant effort to paint the economy as much less service-oriented than do the government's figures. This is accomplished primarily by including wholesale and retail trade in the "goods-producing sector," a stratagem that raises the job percentage of that sector in the economy to 45.7 percent. By the simple expedient of subtracting wholesale and retail trade from goods-producing—not the least because the pay in those sectors is significantly below that in manufacturing as well as for more obvious and traditional reasons—we find that goods-producing provided 28.8 percent of employment in 1982, which is more in line with the usual calculation.

The Stock Exchange engages in a related conceptual maneuver when it places sales workers and clerical workers (along with craft workers) in the "middle echelon" of occupations, and puts operatives in the "lower echelon." In that way—hardly realistic in terms of pay and status—the number of lower-echelon jobs declines in percentage terms between 1982 and 1995, from 37.3 percent to 35 percent.

The Exchange's account of the personal and business sector is somewhat more realistic. The main sources of new jobs in the American economy since 1962, the Exchange says, "have been personal and business services, government, and wholesale and retail trade." Wholesale trade pays, on the average, about 50¢ more than the average private-sector job ($8.02 was the average in 1983; wholesale trade paid $8.54); retail trade, at $5.74 an hour in 1983, is well under the national hourly average.[15]

Within the personal and business service sector, 27.6 percent of the employees are professionals, but 33 percent are service workers and another 17.3 percent are clericals. So if the growth sectors of the future are, as the Exchange maintains, dominantly wholesale and retail trade and personal and business services, that will even further accentuate the trends we have described here.

The Role of High-Tech Industries

BUT WHAT ABOUT EMPLOYMENT POSSIBILITIES in the emerging high-tech industries?

First, it is important to define high-tech industries. Following Eileen Appelbaum, we define as high-tech those industries in which either the percentage of total investment devoted to Research and Development (R & D) expenditures or the number of scientists, engineers, and technical employees is at least twice the average of all U.S. industries. This definition encompasses 32 manufacturing industries as well as such service industries as computer programming, data processing, and research laboratories.[16]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Despite the widespread belief that high technology has been a major source of employment growth, high-tech industry growth rates did not differ much from employment growth in overall manufacturing, which measured 4.2 percent over the decade, and they compare unfavorably with the growth of total employment, which increased 27.6 percent. A subset of high-tech manufacturing industries, however, with both high R&D expenditures and high levels of scientific engineering and technical workers, did experience a 26.3 percent growth rate. Yet these industries added only 444,000 new jobs, 2 percent of the 19 million jobs created during the 1969–79 decade.[17]

Employment in high-tech service-sector industries is growing rapidly, but the small size of the sector limits the total number of jobs created. Thus the computer and data-processing services industry, largest of the high-tech service industries, has added only about 300,000 jobs since 1969.[18]

Rapidly rising productivity in the high-tech industry, combined with the small size of the high-tech sector, constrains the ability of this sector to provide employment. Data Resources, Inc., estimates that the number of new high-tech jobs that will be created between 1983 and 1993 will be 730,000 to 1 million, less than half the jobs lost in manufacturing between 1979 and 1982.[19]

Moreover, assembly jobs in high-tech industries are subject to competition from low-wage labor, particularly in Third World countries such as Malaysia, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Mexico, where assembly workers earn as little as 50¢ an hour. Companies such as Intel, National Semiconductors, Atari, Apple Computers, and Wang Laboratories all have moved jobs to the Far East.

Furthermore, wages in the high-tech sector are two-tiered. Indeed, most of the jobs in high-tech industries are not high-tech jobs. The growth of high-tech employment has meant an increase in professional, technical, and managerial jobs at the top, but it has also meant an increase in clerical, sales, and nonprofessional service jobs at the bottom.

In 1977 the BLS surveyed the semiconductor industry, which then employed 242,600 workers. Of the workers employed in this industry, approximately 58 percent were production workers in the plant, 14 percent were office (nonplant) workers, and the remaining 28.9 percent were administrative, executive, professional, and technical employees. Only 28 percent of the jobs in this industry were good jobs (jobs in the top third of U.S. income distribution), 9.2 percent were in the middle, while 62.8 percent were low-paying jobs.[20] The low-wage production jobs in the industry are poor in other respects too: they are tedious, and many of them expose workers to substantial occupational health hazards. So even if high-tech industries employ more people than these studies indicate, the trend toward bifurcation of the labor market will continue.

All these data tend to support the theories developed by Barry Bluestone, Robert Kuttner, and others, that the "middle" of America's society is in deep trouble. There are, it should be noted, critics who seriously question this interpretation—Sar Levitan, Clifford Johnson, and Robert Samuelson are among them.[21] Part of the problems with these critics is that they rebut the thesis of a "cataclysmic"

TABLE 2

Occupation:	Shares in Total Labor Force: *1950*	*1982*	*1995*	*1982**
Professional, technical workers	8.6%	16.3%	17.1%	$410
Managers	8.7	9.4	9.6	430
Sales Workers	7.0	6.9	6.9	317
Clerical Workers	12.3	18.8	18.9	248
Craft Workers	14.2	11.4	11.6	375
Machine Operaters	20.4	12.8	12.1	252
Service Workers	10.5	16.0	16.3	207
Laborers	6.6	5.8	5.5	243
Farm Workers	11.8	2.7	1.9	186
Total:	100	100	100	$309

*Average weekly earnings.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, in Robert Samuelson, "Middle-Class Media Myth," *National Journal*, December 31, 1983.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

change in the American work force. But, as we emphasize throughout this article, there was no sudden, and surprising, discontinuity in the early 1980s—or, for that matter, in the 1970s.

Daniel Bell, for instance, was describing in 1960 trends toward the gradual transformation of work (and his data are from the 1950s). He extended that theme in an analysis he wrote in the early 1970s.[22] As we noted earlier, the trends we have outlined here have been visible for a decade and a half. See Table 2.

Indeed, a chart cited by Samuelson to refute the notion of the sliding middle actually lends credence to it.

Samuelson emphasizes that there is very little shift in these percentages from 1982 to 1995. We believe that the categories used tend to conceal some of the changes that will take place, but this is not crucial here. Note, however, that between 1950 and 1982 (which are actual, not projected, figures) there was a 37 percent decrease in the jobs of machine operators, a 53 percent increase in clerical workers, and a 55 percent increase in service workers. Samuelson insists that the 13 years between 1982 and 1995 will not see an equivalent transformation, which is right to some extent—but not as much as he thinks.[23]

The sociologist Steven Rose has published two editions of an intricate scholarly poster graphically representing the social structure of the United States. The first edition used 1978 statistics, the second was based on 1983 data.[24] In the second edition, Rose examined the dynamics of income distribution, using the poverty line of 1983 ($9,800 for an urban family of four), the BLS "Low Budget" ($17,000), Medium Budget ($27,500), and High Budget ($41,000). For the changes he then defined, see Table 3.

In fairness, it should be noted that the years compared—1978 and 1983—would tend to emphasize the worst aspects of these trends. The year 1978 was, in wage terms, the peak of the recovery from the 1974–75 slump. And 1983 was a time of partial recovery in which the effects of the worst recession in half a century were still being felt. Even so, the tendencies that are visible in Rose's chart reinforce the basic thesis developed here.

Finally, Robert Kuttner has written an excellent summary statement of the reality we are trying to define here:

> During the three decades after World War II, America not only generated lots of jobs, it generated plenty of good jobs. Between 1958 and 1968, for example, manufacturing added 4 million workers; state and local government added another 3.5 million. A working-class family's child with no education beyond a high-school diploma could nonetheless choose among a number of relatively well-paid jobs, with a wage sufficient to buy a house and support a family, usually on one income.
>
> These are precisely the jobs that are disappearing today. Manufacturing, which on average pays nearly three times the minimum wage, added only 1 million jobs between 1968 and 1978 and has lost nearly 3 million jobs between 1980 and 1982. Construction and production work, taken together, accounted for one job in four in 1950; they account for just one job in

TABLE 3

Reference Point	Percent of the Population* 1978	1983
Below The Poverty Line	15-	15
Between The Poverty Line And Low Budget Line	15+	25
Between The Low And Medium Budget Lines	25+	20
Between The Medium and High Budget Lines	30	20+
Above The High Budget Line	15	20-
Total:	100	100

* Because the budgets are for an urban family of four, our estimates are imprecise. Therefore, the figures are rounded to the nearest 5 percent with a plus or minus.

The changes from 1978 to 1983 are dramatic considering that this is such a short period. In 1978, 55 percent of the population lay between the low and high budget lines. By 1983, this figure had shrunk to just above 40 percent with most falling below the low budget line and a few rising above the high budget marker. Thus, the number of people in the "middle middle class" has fallen while the percentage of those below the low budget line has jumped from 30 to 40 percent.

Source: Steven Rose, *Social Stratification in the United States* (Baltimore: Social Graphics Co., 1983), p. 11.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eight in 1984. State and local government, a key source of good service jobs, peaked in 1981 and has reduced its labor force since then by several hundred thousand workers.[25]

THE OCCUPATIONAL SHIFTS described here lead to an entrenched dual economy. This dual economy persists despite the current recovery. The old liberal wisdom—that in the long run the private economy will generate new and better paying jobs, and that this is the only real solution to poverty—becomes less and less relevant. An occupational structure characterized by a polarization between highly paid professional and technical workers on the one hand and poorly paid, unorganized, lower-level workers on the other will be threatened, not by revolution, but by social demoralization and/or constant outbreaks of individual, nihilistic violence. Only in the fairy-tale mind of Ronald Reagan is it possible to have "prosperity" *and* decreasing opportunity for the poor.

Notes

An earlier version of this article was published by the Research Institute of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Bonn, Germany.

[1] John Naisbitt, "Reinventing the Corporation," *New York Times*, December 23, 1984.

[2] Arthur J. Andreassen, Norman C. Saunders, and Betty W. Su, "Economic Outlook for the 1990s: Three Scenarios for Economic Growth," *Employment Projections for 1995*, U.S. Department of Labor (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office—hereafter G.P.O.—March 1984).

[3] All statistics on the labor force in this section of our article, unless otherwise noted, are from *The Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1984*, U.S. Bureau of the Census (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1984).

[4] "Women at Work," *Business Week*, January 28, 1985.

[5] Lester Thurow, "Jobs versus Productivity: The Euro-American Dilemma," *Technology Review*, October 1984.

[6] "How to Get Jobs," *Economist*, July 28, 1984.

[7] "The Bottom Could Drop Out of Capital Goods," *Business Week*, December 3, 1984.

[8] *International Competitiveness: Perception and Reality*, New York Stock Exchange (New York, 1984), p. 44.

[9] Wassily Leontiev, "Technological Advance, Economic Growth, and the Distribution of Income," *Population and Development Review*, September 1983, p. 403 and passim.

[10] James Fallows, "The Changing Economic Landscape," *Atlantic*, March 1985, pp. 47–68.

[11] "Current Statistics," *Monthly Labor Review*, October 1984, Table 11, p. 62.

[12] U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Publication no. 85–492, November 30, 1984.

A study of unemployed Michigan auto workers reaches similar conclusions. Over 100,000 Michigan auto workers experienced permanent or indefinite layoff between 1979 and 1982. By the summer of 1984, 30 percent of those surveyed had not been recalled. Of those who had not been recalled, 50 percent had found new jobs, 40 percent were still unemployed, and 10 percent had given up looking. Of those reemployed, 33 percent are in nonunion jobs. The wages of those reemployed are on average 21 percent below their previous wage level. Only 59 percent of those reemployed are covered by health insurance. For a summary of this study, see *Research Bulletin*, April 1985 (Detroit: United Automobile Workers of America, Research Dept.).

[13] Michael Urquhart, "The Employment Shift to Services: Where Did It Come from?" *Monthly Labor Review*, April 1984.

[14] "Suddenly the World Doesn't Care," *Business Week*, February 4, 1985. See also, on long-term unemployment among blue-collar workers, *Chicago Steelworkers: The Cost of Unemployment* (Chicago: Hull House and Local 65, United Steelworkers of America, 1985).

[15] *Monthly Labor Review*, October 1984, Table 12, p. 63.

[16] Eileen Appelbaum, "High-Tech and the Structural Employment Problems of the 1980s," in *American Jobs and the Changing Industrial Base*, Eileen Collins and Lucretia Deway Tanner, eds. (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1984), pp. 37–38.

[17] Donald Tomaskovic-Devey and S. M. Miller, "Can High-Tech Provide the Jobs?" *Challenge* (May-June, 1983), p. 60.

[18] Appelbaum, p. 38.

[19] *Business Week*, March 28, 1983, p. 85.

[20] Appelbaum, pp. 41–42.

[21] Sar Levitan and Clifford Johnson, "The Changing Work Place," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, May 1984; Robert Samuelson, "Middle-Class Media Myth," *National Journal*, December 31, 1983.

[22] Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology*, (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960), p. 268; *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 125 ff.

[23] For a critical discussion of these issues, see David B. Bills, with the assistance of Virginia Lambert, "Changes in Social Stratification and Mobility in American Society," 1984 (Chicago: Illinois Institute of Technology, unpublished ms.).

[24] Steven Rose, *Social Stratification in the United States* (Baltimore: Social Graphics Co., 1983), p. 11.

[25] Robert Kuttner, *The Economic Illusion*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), p. 170. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Elliott Currie

Crime and the Conservatives

How Their Analyses Miss the Problem

To understand why we've arrived at our present impasse in dealing with crime, we must first reconsider the assumptions that have guided the dominant policies on crime in America through most of the past decade. This means taking a hard look at the conservative argument about the causes of crime.

At first blush, that may seem a contradiction in terms; during the '70s, conservatives often ridiculed the very idea of searching for the causes of crime. James Q. Wilson took this stance to its most adamant extreme in his influential book, *Thinking About Crime*. To those who contended that crime could be dealt with only by attacking its root causes, Wilson said he "was sometimes inclined, when in a testy mood, to rejoin: stupidity can only be dealt with by attacking its root causes. I have yet to see a root cause," he continued,

> or to encounter a government program that has successfully attacked it, at least with respect to those social problems that arise out of human volition rather than technological malfunction. But more importantly, the demand for causal solutions is, whether intended or not, a way of deferring any action and criticizing any policy. It is a cast of mind that inevitably detracts attention from those few things that government can do reasonably well and draws attention toward those many things it cannot do at all.[1]

On closer inspection, however, it's clear that Wilson's statement confuses two quite different arguments. The first is that it makes no sense to talk about the social or "root" cause of crime at all, either because such causes do not exist or because no one knows what they are or how to find them. The second is an essentially political, rather than conceptual, argument—that government either cannot or should not intervene in the conditions that many criminologists had held to be root causes of crime. The first argument is difficult to take seriously; after all, it is hardly possible to say anything very compelling about crime—or any other social problem—without working from some assumptions about why the problem exists. And, in fact, beneath their rhetoric about the futility of looking for the causes of crime, conservatives have offered at least the elements of a causal theory.

That theory has never been carefully articulated, but it is always some variant of the idea that crime is caused by inadequate "control," that we have a great deal of crime because we have insufficient curbs on the appetites or impulses that naturally impel individuals toward criminal activity. Most conservative writers regard these lurking appetites as a fundamental part of "human nature." As Wilson puts it in *Thinking About Crime*, a "sober" or "unflattering view of man" tells us that "wicked people exist" and that "nothing avails but to set them apart from innocent people."[2]

The difficulty with this as an explanation for crime is not exactly that it is untrue—but that, at this sweepingly general level, it is unhelpful. No one would deny that wicked people exist or that human beings have destructive and predatory impulses against which others must be protected. But such generalizations cannot help us understand why crime is so much worse at some times or places than others. Why are people in St. Louis so much more "prone to

---

This article is adapted from the forthcoming book *Confronting Crime: An American Challenge* by Elliott Currie. Copyright © by Elliott Currie. To be published late this fall by Pantheon Books.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

crime" than those in Stockholm or, for that matter, Milwaukee? Why are people in Houston not only far more likely to kill each other than people in London or Zurich, but also much more likely to do so today than they were 25 years ago?

Faced with these questions, the criminological right has countered with a number of intellectual ploys. One is simply to ignore or deny the difference between our crime rates and those of other industrial societies. Thus, in *Thinking About Crime*, Wilson made a point of caricaturing the belief that crime was "an expression of the political rage of the dispossessed, rebelling under the iron heel of capitalist tyranny"; that this view was thoroughly misguided, he asserted, was proved in part by the fact that "virtually every nation in the world, capitalist, socialist, and communist, has experienced in recent years rapidly increasing crime rates."[3]

One problem with this statement is that, stated so flatly, it is simply untrue. Several countries did *not* experience rapidly rising crime rates in the '60s and '70s, most notably Japan and Switzerland; and in at least one "socialist" developing country, Cuba, the rates of criminal violence fell rather dramatically.[4] Moreover, although many other industrial societies did suffer rising levels of crime in the '60s and '70s, the rises were in property and drug offenses, not in violent crimes like homicide.* In the mid-'70s—just as Wilson was portraying every country as wracked by rapidly rising crime—it was still possible for two respected Scandinavian criminologists to conclude that the risks of victimization by criminal violence remained quite low in Denmark and Norway; indeed, the Danish and Norwegian homicide rates had been "fairly constant" for 40 or 50 years.

An even more important difficulty with the Wilson argument is that the industrial countries whose rates of criminal violence did rise in the '60s and '70s usually began (and ended) at such low levels that to emphasize the similarities between those countries and the United States obscured the much more compelling and dramatic point—the scale of the differences. After what Wilson and others described as nearly two decades of unremitting increases in crime "throughout the world," by the late '70s (in per capita terms) about 10 American men died by criminal violence for every Japanese, Austrian, West German, or Swedish man; about 15 American men died for every Swiss or Englishman; and over 20 for every Dane. During the '60s and '70s, murder rates increased in some of those countries and didn't in others—but in none of them, when Wilson wrote, did they begin to approach those of the United States; nor do they today; nor are they likely to in the foreseeable future.

Obviously, this stubborn reality causes tough problems for a criminology that blames crime on a vaguely defined and immutable "human nature." Consider Wilson's remarks on the prospects for reducing robbery rates. "A sober view of man," he wrote in 1975, "requires a modest definition of progress. A 20 percent reduction in robbery would still leave us with the highest robbery rate of almost any Western nation but would prevent about 60,000 robberies."[5] The internal contradiction in Wilson's reasoning is painfully clear. The wide cross-national variations in crime to which he alludes completely undercut the explanatory power of a "sober view of man"—for "man" is presumably no worse in the United States than in Denmark or Switzerland. But the differences in robbery rates between these places are staggering.

In his more recent work, Wilson acknowledges that several factors—the effects of "real and imagined" racism, the "sharpening of consumer instincts through the mass media," the increased availability of handguns, and the abandonment of the inner city by "persons with a stake in impulse control," among others—may have a special impact on crime in America. Nonetheless, Wilson continues to insist on the curious argument that since the recent increase in crime "is not a peculiarly American phenomenon, but a feature of virtually every industrialized society," a "true understanding of crime depends on what these nations have in

* Throughout this essay, I will observe the standard American practice of defining homicide, forcible rape, robbery (theft with at least the threat of force), and assault as violent crimes. *Property* crimes include burglary and other forms of theft *not* involving force.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

common, not what differentiates them." This remarkable conclusion allows Wilson to retain intact what turns out to be his central premise: that an "ethos of self-expression" common to most modern societies is the fundamental cause of the industrial world's crime problem.[6] In the process, the uniqueness of the American situation simply drops out of sight.

THE ARGUMENT FROM HUMAN NATURE, then, is really too general to be of much help. A similar, unhelpful abstraction lies at the heart of the most systematic conservative theory of the causes of crime—something called, I think misleadingly, the *economic model* of crime. There could, of course, be as many economic models of crime as there are economic theories, but in fact the conservative model is based on just one: the brand of neoclassical economics developed by the "Chicago School." In this model, whether a potential offender commits a crime or not is determined by calculated choice based on a rational weighing of the relative costs and benefits (or *utilities*) of committing the crime versus not doing so. In an often-quoted formulation, the University of Chicago economist Gary Becker argued that someone commits a crime

> if the expected utility to him exceeds the utility he could get by using his time and other resources at other activities. Some persons become "criminals," therefore, not because their basic motivation differs from that of other persons, but because their benefits and costs differ.[7]

Similarly, the conservative economist Gordon Tullock wrote some years later, "If you increase the cost of committing a crime, there will be fewer crimes."[8] Still more recently, the philosopher Ernest Van den Haag put the same argument in terms of the "comparative net advantage" of crime over other activities.

> The number of persons engaged in any activity, lawful or not [Van den Haag writes], depends on the comparative net advantage they expect.... Thus the number of practicing dentists, grocers, drug dealers, or burglars depends on the net advantage which these practitioners expect their occupations to yield compared to other occupations available to them.[9]

Human behavior, criminal or otherwise, is assumed to be like any other exchange in the marketplace. Armed with this conveniently simplified view of human motivation, conservatives have generally blamed the crime rate on the lack of punishment—crime is common because it's "cheap"—although they could just as plausibly argue that where crime rates are especially high, the "comparative net advantage" of lawful behavior must be particularly low. In practice, conservative criminology has concentrated on increasing the "cost" of crime; increasing the relative "benefits" of lawful activity has taken a distinctly subordinate place....

This choice of strategy rests, in part, on a set of arguments about the inability of social policy to do much to boost the "benefit" side of the ledger. I'll come back to those arguments in later chapters. For the moment, though, we can focus on the merits of the "cost" argument itself. On the most abstract level, it certainly isn't unreasonable to believe that perceptions of "cost" have some weight in determining the course of individuals' behavior. But to make the basic argument stick as an explanation of *variations* in crime rates—why a particular country or period has more crime than others—it is necessary to go further: to show that the "costs" of crime are, in those instances, actually lower than in other times or places with less crime. To the extent that the criminological right offers an explanation of American crime patterns vis-à-vis those of other countries (or other periods in our own history), it is that the costs of crime are peculiarly low here and, at least by implication, lower than they were in the past.

II

THERE IS A FUNDAMENTAL DIFFICULTY for the conservative argument: it is hard to maintain that our high rates of crime are caused by insufficient punishment when our penal system is one of the most punitive in the developed world. We lock up offenders at a far greater rate than any other advanced society (except the Soviet Union and South Africa—where the comparison is not wholly appropriate, since many prisoners are political, not "street" criminals). At the beginning of the '80s, the incarceration rate in the United States was about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

217 per 100,000.* At the opposite extreme, the Dutch rate was about 21 per 100,000. In between lay most of the rest of the world's industrial societies, many clustered toward the lower end of the scale: Japan's rate was 44 per 100,000, Norway's 45, Sweden's 55, West Germany's 60, Denmark's 63, France's 67, Great Britain's a relatively high 80 per 100,000.[10]

In part, these low rates reflect some countries' use of prison as only a last resort, for the most dangerous offenders; in part they reflect a common practice of incarcerating criminals for relatively short periods. The latter is especially true in Holland, where the average time served in the late 1970s was an astonishing 1.3 months, versus about 5 months in Britain and about 16 in the United States. The shorter sentences are not simply a reflection of the less serious range of offenses in Holland; average sentences handed down for a given *class* of offenses also differ greatly. Thus the average maximum sentence for robbery was 150 months in the U.S. federal prisons and 68 months in the state prisons; in the Dutch prisons, it was 19 months.[11]

Moreover, many West European countries deliberately decreased their use of imprisonment during the '60s and '70s, while beginning in the '70s we moved relentlessly in the other direction. The average Dutch robbery sentence fell to 19 months in 1981 from 32 months in 1950; between 1951 and 1975, the Dutch prison population as a whole dropped by *half.*

Given these huge and growing disparities between our rates of imprisonment and those of otherwise comparable societies, how can one argue that our crime rate (as the *Wall Street Journal*'s editors recently put it) "has undoubtedly resulted from the absence of punishment"? One attempt to maintain the argument is to turn it on its head and claim that, given the severity of the American crime problem, we make relatively limited use of incarceration—so that the likelihood of punishment for convicted offenders is actually smaller here. Wilson, for example, draws an analogy with medical care; to claim that we "overimprison" people in the United States, he writes, "is like disproving the need for hospitals by saying that the United States already hospitalizes a larger fraction of its population than any other nation," for it "implies that we are sending people to prison without any regard to the number of crimes committed (or sending them to hospitals without regard to whether they are sick)." The "proper question," Wilson insists, is "whether we imprison a higher fraction of those arrested, prosecuted, and convicted than do other nations." His answer is that we do not.[12]

There are two things wrong with Wilson's argument. To begin with, it is not at all clear why this is the "proper question." Certainly, it doesn't help us understand the relationship between levels of crime and levels of punishment. For if it is offered as an explanation of high crime rates in America, the argument is perilously close to circular, since it does not tell us why so many crimes are committed here in the first place. A closer look at the medical analogy reveals the logical problem. If one country already possesses more hospitals per capita than any other but still produces more sickness, it is implausible to blame its comparative ill health on the relative lack of hospitals. To be sure, a country with a lot of illness will "need" many hospitals, just as a country with a lot of crime will "need" many prisons. But if we want to understand either why so many people are ill to begin with or how we could prevent these excessive levels of illness in the future, we will need to look at other aspects of the country —sanitation, nutrition, environmental hazards, perhaps even cultural values—or we will be fruitlessly building hospitals forever to accommodate the ever-increasing flow of the sick.

The same logic ought to apply in the case of criminal justice. If we already imprison people at a higher rate than other countries, we cannot blame our own uniquely high crime rate on the underuse of imprisonment, without reasoning in a circle. If we want to understand why so many people here have become criminals, we will need to look at other factors that distinguish us from more fortunate countries.

But there is an even more immediate difficulty with Wilson's argument—its facts are wrong. Wilson's only source of evidence for his contention that the United States is relatively

* The rate is higher now, but I'll use the earlier figure to make comparison with other countries possible.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sparing in its use of prison is a 1978 study by the Yale economist Kenneth I. Wolpin. This analysis showed that in the 1960s—when American incarceration rates were much lower than they are today—the chance of imprisonment for convicted robbers was higher in England than in the United States (although the American sentences were more severe): between 1961 and 1967, a convicted robber's chance of going behind bars was 48 percent in England and 31 percent in the United States (for an average sentence of 2.9 years in England, 3.5 years in America).[13]

On the surface, these figures lent some credence to the notion that the British might be "tougher" on robbers, if only in the sense of greater consistency, not severity, of punishment. The trouble is that Wolpin's analysis—as he pointed out himself in a later study—neglected to include in its estimates of incarceration rates the great numbers of convicted offenders sent to *local jails* in the United States—a crucial omission indeed, since including them in the calculations completely reversed the outcome.

Wolpin's later, more inclusive study compared robbery in the United States (specifically in California), to England and Japan. This time he found that convicted robbers were considerably *more* likely to go to prison or jail in the United States than in either England or Japan. Wolpin's study covered the years from 1955 to 1971—well before the prison "boom" of the '70s that doubled the American incarceration rate. But even then, a convicted robber had a 63 percent chance of going behind bars in California, versus 48 percent in England and 46 percent in Japan. England's robbers, furthermore, spent only about half as much time behind bars as those in Japan or in California. Meanwhile, according to official statistics, California's robbery rate averaged over 17 times the British rate and over 28 times the Japanese.

Developments over time are also revealing. In all three countries, as Wolpin's later study showed, convicted robbers were *less* likely to go to prison at the end of the period than at the beginning. But this consistent decline in the "costs" of robbery had completely contradictory effects on robbery rates in the different countries: robbery increased in California and still more in England, but declined rather dramatically in Japan.[14]

In short, contrary to Wilson's claims, we do indeed incarcerate more of those arrested and convicted than do the English and Japanese—who, in turn, use incarceration more readily than, for example, the Swiss or the Dutch. Wolpin's studies do bring up an important distinction: the Japanese and the British *catch* criminals more often than we do, and generally convict them more frequently once caught. Why this should be so is a difficult and unresolved question. Suffice it to say that the difficulty in apprehending criminals has little to do with the *leniency* of American justice. And while the difficulty in convicting them once caught may have some relation to American court practices, the evidence indicates that any effects of this on the crime rate are quite small. The fundamental point at issue here remains: the United States is indeed the most punitive of advanced Western industrial societies toward those offenders who are brought to the stage of sentencing.

Moreover, we have become dramatically more punitive over time. If there ever were "years of neglect" in the punishment of criminals in America, they are long past. In the 1960s, those who believed that the "softness" of American justice was responsible for our crime rate had a more plausible case. In some places at least, we made less use of imprisonment than we had some years before. Our incarceration rates fell for several years, and didn't rise even as the crime rate began to do so in the '60s. In this context it was at least possible to argue that crime might be rising because criminals had it easier than before. But we have been steadily and massively increasing the "costs" of crime for many years.

The simplest way to measure these changes is to look at the national incarceration rate. In 1970 there were fewer than 200,000 inmates of state and federal prisons in the United States; by mid-1984, more than 450,000. Because the country's population grew during the same years, the change in the *rate* of incarceration is slightly smaller, but not much: about 96 of every 100,000 Americans were in a state or federal prison in 1970; in 1984, about 195 of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

every 100,000. (Note that these figures do not include the rising population in local jails. And in some states, the rise was even more rapid — South Carolina went from 105 per 100,000 in 1970 to 268 in 1982.)

It might be argued that these huge increases only reflected a desperate race to keep up with the crime rate—or to cope with a much more serious mix of criminals coming before the courts. But this is not the case. The rate of imprisonment was rising much faster than the crime rate; yet not only did the crime rate refuse to fall in some reasonably corresponding fashion, but at the end of the '70s it surged sharply—and by the logic of the conservative model, incomprehensibly—upward.

III

SOME CONSERVATIVES have come to recognize the inadequacy of the declining-cost argument, especially given the depressing results of a decade of getting tough with criminals. Yet this experience has not generally altered the underlying premises of the conservative argument—only shifted its ground. For most conservative writers, crime still represents a weakening of controls over what is solemnly regarded as an obdurate and fundamentally wicked human nature. The finger of blame points more often these days to a range of institutions outside the criminal-justice system —the schools, the family, and American culture as a whole, along with a wide gamut of "misguided" liberal social policies and the malignant influence of "government." The central theme is still that our society is insufficiently punitive and controlling, especially of children and youth; that we allow too much easy gratification of the darker impulses and actively encourage a destructive "self-expression," instead of the virtues of sobriety, self-restraint, and the curbing of appetites. The institutions that ought to keep wayward impulses in line—and, according to this argument, once did—have lately lost much of their influence. This is usually blamed either on long-term shifts in the norms and values common to "modern" societies or on the naïveté (or malevolence) of the liberal shapers of contemporary opinion.

The evolution of James Q. Wilson's views reflects this change of emphasis. His *Thinking About Crime* was a fairly conventional mid-'70s statement of the economic model of crime. We had "trifled with the wicked," Wilson thundered, and "encouraged the calculators." Even then, Wilson—unlike some of his less restrained colleagues—did not argue that we could expect *great* reductions in crime through increasing its "costs," but this was still the main policy recommendation in what was generally an admonition that we would have to "learn to live with crime."[15]

In his recent revision of the book, Wilson still insists that "deterrence works," but he has moved further away from believing that *much* can be accomplished by increasing penalties—and even less by improving "benefits." The deeper, more intractable sources of crime, Wilson now insists, are the effects of "discordant homes, secularized churches, intimidated schools, and an ethos of self-expression." What has ultimately corroded social life in the United States during the 20th century is the triumph of "self-expression over self-control as a core human value"; we have learned to "exalt rights over duties, spontaneity over loyalty, tolerance over conformity, and authenticity over convention."[16]

This is little more than the stock theme of insidious moral decline that has predictably been invoked to explain not just crime and delinquency but nearly everything the contemporary conservative finds wrong with American society—from the divorce rate and the decline in the growth of productivity to the much-lamented weakening of America's will to impose military solutions on a recalcitrant world. What should we make of it as an explanation for American crime rates?

Not much. The links between these broad cultural shifts and crime—particularly serious, violent street crime—are not at all evident, even if we accept Wilson's assessment of our recent moral decline. For one thing, as he himself makes clear, the moral and cultural changes that he says explain America's *current* crime problem started decades before our recent rises in crime; furthermore, they don't correlate even remotely with the trends of serious criminality in American history.

For Wilson, America's moral downfall can be traced back to the 1920s, when "we see the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

educated classes repudiating moral uplift as it had been practiced for the preceding century."[17] A pervasive and, Wilson believes, largely effective 19th century effort to control "self-indulgent impulses" was increasingly derided by the "educated elite" as narrow-minded, fundamentalist, and provincial, and replaced by the "self-expression ethic." This transformation was facilitated by an imposing, if unusual, array of villains, including Freudian psychology, cultural anthropology, and the women's magazines. Popular versions of Freudian theory (Wilson acknowledges they may be distorted) proclaimed that "repressing one's instincts was bad, not good." Cultural anthropology further undermined the moral order of American society by promoting the view that "this culture was wrong, or at the very least no better than several competing cultural forms." Margaret Mead comes in for a special drubbing for having claimed that "the greater happiness of Samoans arose from their being granted greater sexual freedom and from being raised in more nurturant, less repressive families."

Granted, these changes are real, and Wilson is entitled to his jaundiced view of them. But what do they have to do with crime? Wilson himself vacillates between acknowledging that he isn't sure they have anything at all to do with it, and speculating that these cultural and intellectual shifts somehow created a moral climate that must be held responsible, albeit 40 years later, for the crime rates of the late '60s. One way in which they could have influenced crime, he suggests, is by prompting changes in child-rearing, which might "alter the behavior of the young by making them more daring and more impatient of restraints." Possibly. But, as Wilson admits, "it is quite difficult to say much about the changes in child-rearing that occurred, and it is almost impossible to say anything about how these changes might have affected the behavior of the young."

Then why should we continue this unpromising line of investigation? Because, Wilson insists, despite our lack of evidence, we can still say "something about" how elites *advised* mothers to bring up their children; and since the advice appeared in popular magazines, it reached a wide audience, whether in fact it influenced anyone or not. This advice shifted the aims of child-rearing away from the 19th-century emphasis on guarding the child from "evil within and evil without"—that is, from a view of the child as "endowed by nature with dangerous impulses that must be curbed"—to one in which the child was seen as equipped with "harmless instincts that ought to be developed."

Wilson's description of this literature is something of a caricature; in fact, it is hard to find any child-rearing literature in this period that totally ignores discipline and supervision in the name of developing "harmless instincts." More crucially, it is difficult to detect any convincing chronological relationship between the cultural changes that did take place in the 1920s and the course of serious crime over the next 60 years. Wilson does not claim that the rise of an ethos of "self-expression" had any observable, direct connection with crime rates. Indeed, he concedes that "it is not clear that this shift in the dominant ethos of the social and intellectual elites had immediate and important practical consequences." After all, in the '20s and the early '30s criminal violence was high (a phenomenon often considered an unfortunate side effect of Prohibition, a program of "moral uplift" that Wilson apparently admires), but it was lower thereafter until its rise during the '60s. How then can we argue that the two are strongly and closely related—or explain why the new ethos skipped a generation before causing the crime rates of the '60s and '70s?

Wilson's answer has two parts. First, the deadly suffusion of the ethos of self-expression was "cut short" by the Great Depression. Youths in particular were forced by grim economic reality into hard work and "traditional" attitudes, and the crime rate went down. Though this is a vastly oversimplifed rendering of what the evidence says about crime in the Depression, it isn't altogether far-fetched. But it wasn't grim economic reality that kept the crime rates low in the prosperous postwar period—precisely the years that witnessed both the emergence of the "youth culture" Wilson deplores and the spread of the child-centered approach to upbringing whose pernicious impact Wilson singles out for blame. An "ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

planation" contending that both good times and bad had similar restraining effects on the movement toward "self-expression" is not easily grasped. Indeed, Wilson barely tries to make its logic clear to us.

The second half of the explanation for the delay of more than four decades between the onset of the disease of self-expression and the sudden, explosive manifestation of its symptom of criminal violence is that—as Wilson puts it—in the early years these cultural shifts affected only "elite," rather than "mass," attitudes. The hint here, never fully articulated, is that at some point, by some mechanism, destructive ideas about authenticity and self-expression filtered down from the avant-garde to a wider audience. In the '60s, apparently, this resulted from a "celebration of the youth culture in the marketplace, in the churches, and among adults." This "institutionalization in all parts of society of the natural desire of youth for greater freedom," Wilson suggests, "may well have given legitimacy to all forms of self-expression—including, alas, those forms that involve crime and violence."

Once again, this line of argument combines a blend of truisms with dizzying leaps of inference that, on close inspection, lack support. Wilson merges a common critique of the '60s youth-culture shenanigans with another matter altogether: the serious criminality that wracked the United States in the late '60s and the '70s. Certainly, some of what went on in the name of self-expression and liberation was at best silly and at worst destructive and inhumane. No doubt, there was a connection between these attitudes and a wide range of youthful behavior that violated the law, especially with regard to drugs and sex. But that isn't the issue. The crucial question is whether the ethos of "rights, not duties," a preference for "spontaneity over loyalty, conscience over honor, tolerance over conformity, self-expression over self-restraint," which animated the salons of the '20s and the campuses of the '60s, also accounts for the brutal violence in the streets and homes of the '60s, '70s, and '80s. And here the argument collapses.

It collapses partly because it makes the wrong prediction about where serious criminal violence takes place. "Elite" and intellectual communities are not where violent crime is common; in fact, they are usually remarkably free of it. Places like Madison or Ann Arbor, which led the campus counterculture in the '60s, maintained the low rates of serious crime that we rightly associate with communities of fairly affluent young people and professionals. The same is true of the urban and suburban concentrations of the "new class" that Wilson holds responsible for many of the social problems of the past 20 years. His position seems to be that the real problem isn't that "elite" values led to violence among the elite themselves, but that, in a wonderful parallel with supply-side economics, they "trickle down" to the lower orders, who promptly go out and put guns to people's heads.

I am not suggesting that cultural changes had nothing to do with the rising crime rates of the '60s. One such change—the weakening of long-standing social norms justifying racial inequality—probably had an important influence. Although we have no hard quantitative measures, many careful observers at the time were convinced that this momentous change helped turn minority anger fueled by decades of injustice and deprivation outward against whites and their institutions. Some of that anger was expressed in formal protest, some in rebellion, and some in street crime—which may help explain the rising incidence of interracial robbery and of "stranger-to-stranger" crime generally in the '60s. But this is not the same as the vague argument that the values of "tolerance" and "authenticity" were what motivated the youth of the New Orleans or Detroit ghettos to inaugurate the rising curve of urban violence in the late '60s.

In fact, everything we know from social research about the values usually found in the social strata that produce most severely violent criminals tells us something very different. There, tolerance and individual expression in child-rearing practices are not encouraged; but more often, their opposite—conformity, constraint, and unquestioning obedience, sometimes enforced by violence. Obviously, parents' efforts to instill these values often fail. But that is very different from saying that young people from the ghettos and barrios of America's inner cities go astray because their parents

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have taught them bohemian values learned, at some distance remove, from the writings of elite, liberal intellectuals.*

IV

THE OVEREMPHASIS ON CONTROL to the exclusion of other issues appears even in some more thoughtful writers who have moved beyond this simplistic reliance on "permissiveness" as an explanation of America's unusually high crime rates. . . .

David Bayley's analysis of the causes for Japan's low, relatively stable (and at some points declining) crime rate in recent years leads to a fashionably pessimistic conclusion:

> The levels of criminal behavior that Americans find so disturbing may be the inevitable consequence of aspects of national life that Americans prize—individualism, mobility, privacy, autonomy, suspicion of authority, and separation between public and private roles, between government and community. The United States may have relatively high levels of criminality because it is inhabited by Americans.[18]

This argument does point to something important about the American experience—but in this form it obscures more than it illuminates. By shifting the explanation of the causes of crime onto an amorphous, ill-defined realm of culture or values detached from the social and economic context that nourishes or undermines them, such reasoning conveys a vague sense—more a mood than an argument—that the roots of crime are beyond human control, thus encouraging inaction and passivity. If we have a lot of crime in America *because* we're Americans, there isn't much we can do about it. But the argument fits uneasily with the facts. If "individualism" and a cultural penchant for "autonomy" are indeed the problem, why do the notoriously individualistic Yankees of New Hampshire ("Live Free or Die") or the ruggedly individualistic Scandinavians of Minnesota have rates of serious criminal violence that compare well with those of Western Europe, or of Japan? Why do black Americans, who presumably do not value "individualism" any more than white Americans (or Hispanic Americans, who may value it less), have rates that are so much higher?

It is important to acknowledge that even with all its rhetorical excesses, the conservative argument about the links between crime and culture raises important questions—questions that liberal criminology has sometimes sidestepped. The criminology of the '60s too often focused on the simpler malfunctions of what was viewed as an otherwise smoothly functioning social and moral order: it implied that a little income support here, a summer-job program there would, by themselves, stop crime. The conservative argument, at its most suggestive part, points beyond to what Peter Steinfels, in *The Neoconservatives*, aptly calls the "murkier and more trying questions of culture and spirit"—and, I would add, of family and community.[19] These are difficult issues to grasp, and especially hard to frame in the manageable terms of quantitative social science, but I do not think we will really understand crime without paying them respectful attention.

In the hands of conservative writers, however, these issues have usually been raised in terms so mired in ideology and so beholden to

---

* Since this was written, James Q. Wilson and the psychologist Richard Herrnstein have published a new book, *Crime and Human Nature* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985). On the whole, I don't think the new work contains much that changes the assessment of Wilson's views I've drawn here. What makes this book different from most of his earlier writing is the prominent place it gives to "constitutional" factors in explaining crime. Wilson and Herrnstein are more restrained than some other commentators in their claims for the importance of genetic and biological factors in explaining the crime rate; but they are prepared to argue (on p. 88) that "distribution of crime within and across societies may, to some extent, reflect underlying distributions of constitutional factors."

We are not offered evidence for that suggestion—or even an argument, however speculative—about why those concentrations of constitutional predispositions to crime should turn up when and where they do. Instead, that assertion, coupled with these authors' continuing skepticism about the possibility of reducing crime through intervention in the labor market or the larger community, seems to be mainly invoked to support the curiously passive stance toward the possibilities of concerted social action against the roots of crime that has characterized Wilson's work from the beginning. Indeed, Wilson and Herrnstein appear in this book to come close to abandoning the search for workable policies against criminal violence altogether. After more than 450 pages of analysis of research on the causes of crime, they are able to conclude only that their argument is not one "from which many (possibly any) clear policy recommendations can be deduced" (p. 460).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

political agendas as to obscure the questions they suggest. Conservative analysis has steadfastly shied away from confronting—or even naming—the underlying forces that shape cultural, communal, and family life. As Steinfels has also noted, this stance fixes our attention on a "realm of ideas and ethos" that seems to float free of its moorings in the economic and social changes that have transformed American society, and as a result obscures the interconnection between them.

Conservative writing on crime, for example, has often focused on the spread of an ethos of "immediate gratification," a concern voiced even in the pages of the report of the Reagan administration's Task Force on Violent Crime. There is reason for this concern; some kinds of crime are almost by definition the expression of a search for immediate gratification. Yet—aside from the incessant references to the noxious influence of liberal permissiveness—conservative writers don't identify the forces that might foster such an "ethos." This is surely a remarkable omission in a society where, more than in any other, an ethos of ever-increasing consumption for the sake of impulse gratification has become indispensable to our economy and has penetrated almost every corner of our life; where the world's most sophisticated advertising industry devotes itself day in, day out, to promoting just that ethos; and where, in contrast to many other advanced industrial societies, the search for the highest and fastest short-term profit at the expense of longer-term economic stability—the corporate version of instant gratification—is enshrined as the overarching principle of economic life.

I've argued that, from an international perspective, America cannot plausibly be considered a "tolerant" or "lenient" society; it is, however, an acquisitive and hedonistic one. These cultural attitudes surely have some relationship to the severity of our crime problem. But we must understand that they are indissolubly linked to an economy dependent on the incessant stimulation of mass consumption. As Daniel Bell writes in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, "the one thing that would utterly destroy the 'new capitalism' is the serious practice of 'deferred gratification.' "[20] If we have moved away from a less grasping, more cooperative culture in recent years—and I believe we have—we must look, as Bell does, to the social and economic forces that have brought about this shift.

In the absence of that sort of analysis, the conservative emphasis on culture, values, and tradition degenerates into wistful nostalgia or, worse, into a self-righteous, punitive demand for more corporal punishment, harsher discipline in the family and the schools, and the indiscriminate use of the prisons as holding pens for an urban underclass we have decided "to give up on."

The conservative model turns out to be shot through with contradictions. In a world of dramatic national variations in criminal violence, it blames crime on an invariant human nature. In a society that ranks among the most punitive in the developed world, it blames crime on the leniency of the justice system. In a country noted for its harsh response to social deviation, it blames crime on attitudes of tolerance run wild. If we want to understand the

RICHARD LOURIE
First Loyalty

A disillusioned Russian scientist discovers a serum that prolongs life and smuggles the formula to New York. At the same time, a Soviet dissident poet—really a KGB agent—is exiled to the West. What follows is a gripping story of intrigue and murder, loyalty and ambition in a work of exceptional literary merit.

The New York Times: "[A] *superior cold-war thriller . . . rich with texture and meaning.*"

A BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB ALTERNATE
$17.95, now at bookstores

HBJ Harcourt Brace Jovanovich

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American experience of criminal violence, we must look elsewhere for the elements of an explanation, particularly to those features of our social life that distinguish us—in fact rather than in fantasy—from more fortunate societies. □

Notes

[1] James Q. Wilson, *Thinking About Crime* (New York, Random House, 1975), p. xv.

[2] Wilson, *Thinking About Crime*, p. 235.

[3] Wilson, *Thinking About Crime*, p. xiii.

[4] See Marshall B. Clinard, *Cities with Little Crime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); David Downes, "The Origins and Consequences of Dutch Penal Policy Since 1945," *British Journal of Criminology* 22, no.4 (October 1982); Robert J. Smith, *Japanese Society: Tradition, Self, and the Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Luis Salas, *Social Control and Deviance in Cuba* (New York: Praeger, 1979).

[5] Wilson, *Thinking About Crime*, p. 223.

[6] Wilson, "Crime and American Culture," *Public Interest*, Winter 1983, pp. 38–39.

[7] Cited in James Thompson et al., *Employment and Crime: A Review of Theories and Research* (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, 1981), pp. 31–32.

[8] Gordon Tullock, "Does Punishment Deter Crime?" *Public Interest*, Summer 1974, p. 105.

[9] Ernest Van den Haag, "Could Successful Rehabilitation Reduce the Crime Rate?" *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 73, (Fall 1982), pp. 1025, 1035.

[10] Eugene Doleschal and Anne Newton, *International Rates of Imprisonment* (Hackensack, N.J.: National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 1981).

[11] See Downes, "Dutch Penal Policy" (see Note 4), pp. 330–34; D. W. Steenhuis et al., "The Penal Climate in the Netherlands: Sunny or Cloudy?" *British Journal of Criminology* 23, no. 1 (January 1983). For American sentences, see U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Prison Admissions and Release, 1981* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Justice, 1984).

[12] James Q. Wilson, "Dealing with the High-Rate Offender," *Public Interest*, Fall 1982, p. 68.

[13] Kenneth I. Wolpin, "An Economic Analysis of Crime and Punishment in England and Wales, 1894–1967," *Journal of Political Economy* 86, no. 5 (October 1975).

[14] Kenneth I. Wolpin, "A Time-Series Cross-Sectional Analysis of International Variations in Crime and Punishment," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 62, no. 3 (August 1980).

[15] Wilson, *Thinking About Crime*, p. 236.

[16] See Wilson's article, "Thinking About Crime," *Atlantic*, September 1983, p. 88.

[17] The following paragraphs are based on Wilson, "Crime and American Culture," pp. 32–38.

[18] David H. Bayley, "Learning About Crime: The Japanese Experience," *Public Interest*, Summer 1976, p. 68.

[19] Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1980), pp. 92, 246.

[20] Daniel Bell, "The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism," in *Capitalism Today*, Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol, eds. (New York: New American Library, 1971), p. 53. □

To Our Contributors:

A few suggestions:

(1) Be sure to keep a copy of your ms—the mails aren't always reliable. And please remember that we can't return articles unless they're accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

(2) Please don't write to ask whether we're interested in such and such an article—it makes for useless correspondence. Look at our last few issues to see if your idea fits in. Or take a chance and send us your article.

(3) Type your ms *double-spaced*, with *wide* margins. Check all your figures, dates, names, etc.—they're the author's responsibility.

(4) Notes and footnotes should also be typed double-spaced, on a *separate* sheet. As we're not an academic journal, we prefer that they, wherever possible, be dropped altogether or worked into the text.

(5) We're usually quick in giving editorial decisions. If there's a delay, it's because a few editors are reading your article.

(6) Please bear with us—we have accumulated quite a backlog of material, and you may have to wait for a few issues before you see your article in print.

THE EDITORS □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Robert Heilbroner

The State and Capitalism

How They Interact and Move Apart

Like all social formations, capitalism is not merely a Chinese puzzle in which all elements are of equal importance in locking together the whole. In capitalism as in other regimes, a central organizing principle and its institutions influence all aspects of the social formation, whether these be concerned with material life, justice and social order, or custom and belief. In primitive societies that organizing principle is kinship with its networks of reciprocity; in tributary societies it is the principle of centralized rulership with its associated aristocratic or priestly hierarchies; and in capitalism it is capital with its self-expanding attributes.

In insisting on the pervasive importance of identifying historically specific cores within social formations, I am very much aware of the pitfalls of reductionism. These dangers, mordantly described by E. P. Thompson, derive from a mechanical conception of social relations in which rigid determinations force all elements in society to respond in mechanical fashion to changes in the foundational structure.[1] This impoverishment of social analysis is by no means an unavoidable consequence of the central placement of a given set of institutions with their attendant belief systems. Rather, the sense of a historical reference point implicit in such a central placement gets us around the difficulties that arise from a failure to assign any hierarchy of importance to principles, so that society does indeed take on the appearance of a Chinese puzzle without a decisive structural element.

Let me instance this difficulty in a work in which I find much to admire, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* by Daniel Bell.[2] Bell here avoids defining the concept of capitalism despite its prominence in the title of his work. Instead he describes "modern society" as the product of a "disjunction" of realms, none of which clearly dominates the whole. He writes:

> . . . I find it more useful to think of *contemporary society* . . . as three distinct realms, each of which is obedient to a different axial principle. I divide society, analytically, into the *techno-economic* structure, the *polity*, and the *culture*. These are not congruent with one another and have different rhythms of change; they follow different norms which legitimate different, and even contrasting, types of behavior. It is the discordances between these realms which are responsible for the various contradictions within society.[3]

Bell's focus on distinct economic, political, and cultural realms would seem to bring his analysis close to mine. There is, however, a sharp difference. Take, for instance, the techno-economic structure. As Bell describes

---

This is an excerpt from *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism* by Robert Heilbroner. Copyright © 1985 by Robert Heilbroner. To be published this fall by W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., and reprinted here with the kind permission of the publishers.

[1] See E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), chap. 1

[2] Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976). See also his *The Winding Passage* (Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Books, 1980), pp. xiv–xv.

[3] Bell, *Cultural Contradictions*, p. 10 (his italics).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it, this realm "frames the occupation and stratification system of the society and involves the use of technology for instrumental ends. In modern society the axial principle is *functional rationality*, and the regulative mode is *economizing*."[4]

But what is functional rationality? Surely, the answer can only be given by reference to some other underlying principle of the society. Under capitalism what criteria of "functional rationality" determine the "economizing" of labor, other than the maximization of profit? Certainly, if the frame of reference were not the accumulation of capital but the development of functional or rational individuals in the sense of versatile or educated men and women, the mode of economizing accepted by the existing order would not pass muster.

In similar fashion, we discover that the principles described by Bell as "axial" in other spheres also beg the question of the referential point. In the political realm Bell designates "legitimacy" and "representation or participation" as the crucial validating concepts. In the realm of culture it is the "expression and remaking of the 'self' in order to achieve self-realization and fulfillment."[5] But as with the techno-economic sphere, these descriptions leave unasked the crucial questions: Legitimacy of what? Participation or representation in which processes? The "self" conceived as what manner of being?

What seems fatally missing from the analysis is that all of these questions are normally answered within "contemporary society" in ways that are defined by, or at least compatible with, the regime of capital. The boundaries of the terms *legitimacy*, *representation and participation*, and *self-expression* are conventionally decided in political life by the necessity to preserve the critical wage-labor institution and to continue the generation of surplus for surplus's sake. Is this not the principle that sets the limits to "practical" politics, draws the line as to the agenda of national discussion, and validates the prevailing commercial tone of culture? Thus it is not the free contention of realms that holds the essence of capitalism, as I see it, but their tense containment within a set of economic imperatives.

A second objection to the multiaxial principle brings us to examine the purpose for which it was originally intended—namely, to provide an explanation of the corrosive, possibly fatal "contradictions" of contemporary society. The question is this: If the realms coexist in an unordered, equivalent manner, how shall we distinguish the trials and tribulations of modern capitalism from those of other societies in the throes of their contradictions? Did not the Roman empire or late feudalism or Ming China have their techno-economic structures, their polities, and their cultures, each with its axial principle? Were not the conflicts and contradictions among those realms decisive in changing, perhaps even in destroying, these societies? If that is granted, in what way are the contradictions of modern society different from those of previous ones?

The answer—and I think it one with which Bell would agree—is that the contradictions of capitalism somehow arise from the nature and logic of the system—that is, from the unfolding of a society under the peculiar stresses and strains generated by its historically unique search for generalized surplus. The contradictions of other societies arose from different sources—sometimes economic; that is, rooted in the organization of labor and in the wrenching of surplus from labor's product—but equally or more frequently they arose from political or cultural crises, such as breakdowns in political succession or religious convulsions. Contemporary society is not spared these ancient sources of disruption, but it bears within itself the seeds of another kind of endemic economic crisis for which no parallel can be discerned in prior social entities. This unique kind of crisis does not arise from a general disjunction of realms but from the specific tendencies of capital itself, the distinctive aspect of the society whose nature we are trying to understand.

Thus it seems to me that the failure to accord centrality to one principle and its embodying institutions—not, of course, the same ones for all social formations—robs social analysis of its clarificatory potential as gravely as the dogmatic insistence that all attributes of

[4] Bell, *Cultural Contradictions*, p. 11.

[5] Bell, *Cultural Contradictions*, pp. 12, 13.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

any given society can be explained as mere epiphenomena of its mode of production or of any other organizing structure. In our own case, unless we place the regime of capital at the center of the stage, where it dominates the play, there is no "capitalism" whose cultural contradictions have any special character. I repeat that domination is not rigid determination. There have been critical moments in the history of capitalism, as in the history of other societies, when decisive blows have descended from unexpected actors, ideas, interests, or accidents. Even then, the milieu into which these blows descend, whatever their explosive power, is not a drama of Pirandello-like characters in search of identities and meanings, but a society engaged in and enthralled by the nature and consequent logic of its organizing principle.

From this perspective it is a matter of course that capital, as the dominating principle of the society identified by its presence, must color and infiltrate the institutions and beliefs that lie beyond its immediate ambit of operation. The state that carries on the formal tasks of government, or the ideational structures that contain and convey its world views, could no more escape being recognizable as "capitalist" than could the governing institutions or the ideational creations of earlier formations escape being identifiable as belonging to tributary or feudal forms of historical society. The influence of the economic realm on its intertwined political and social realms does not therefore involve any mechanical dependency or slavish passivity of the latter but only their congruence with, and complementarity to, the operating relationships of capital. Such a view is perfectly compatible with the obvious fact that the hand of the state, although generally exercised on behalf of the regime of capital, is also stayed by notions of fairness and justice as well as political expediency. By utilizing its power to the hilt, for example, it might be possible for the state to depress wages dramatically, thereby assisting the accumulation of capital; but the full force of state power is normally held back by consideration of bourgeois morality itself, or simply by the calculations of prudence.

It is therefore not only possible, but necessary, to accord to the political and ideological realms a degree of freedom to act on behalf of motives that antedate those of capital accumulation and that persist alongside it, although generally subordinated to it. What is needed is no more—and, of greater importance, no less—than a recognition of the existence of general priorities and interests without which no social formation has any historical center of gravity.

I will return to the question of the permeation of the principle of capital into the other realms of its regime. First, however, we must look more carefully into the properties of the economic and political spheres themselves, in particular those that comprise the productive and distributive activities of the social formation, and those that define the realm charged with governance.

We have already referred to the familiar fact that no clear-cut division exists between economic and political activities in precapitalist orders. More precisely, nothing like an economic "realm" can be discovered in any of them. Of course, the physical and social undertakings necessary for material survival are visible in all societies, as are also the technical and organizational problems of altering or channeling these undertakings. What prevents these activities from constituting a "realm" is the absence of any formal boundaries that exclude the exercise of state power over the organization or direction of production or distribution. The economic domain is simply of one piece with the political. To put it somewhat differently, the crucial relationship of domination in tributary systems is applied alike with regard to the allocation of labor or the administration of justice, to the extraction of rents or the inflicting of punishment. There is no essential difference between the disciplining or the marshaling of a labor force and an army, although the former generally requires less effort because it can rely on the inertia of tradition.

As a consequence, in all tributary systems there is but one realm, that of the "political" order. I place the word in quotation marks because in many of these early systems even this aspect of domination has not acquired a distinctive association with "the state" and its apparatus, as opposed to the mere expression of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a single ruler's will. What is important is that the exercise of power, whether expressed by a single ruler or a state bureaucracy, combines the enforcement of political relations of sub- and superordination with the economic performance of various tasks. Thus the warlord collecting his tribute, part of which will be conveyed to the imperium, is at one and the same time manifesting a political relationship of domination and obedience, and carrying out an economic function of surplus collection and distribution. In the same fashion, the peasant making his rental payments or taking part in a corvée is simultaneously evidencing the relationship of explicit obedience on which the polity is founded and producing the subsistence and surplus on which it lives. It is but a slight exaggeration, if any at all, to claim that there is no activity that results in the production or the allocation of material wealth that is not also the embodiment of the hierarchical principle of the system.

For an economic realm to emerge, that pervasive and unchallenged rulership must yield up some portion of its sovereignty, recognizing, so to speak, the existence of an autonomous republic of commerce and production within its own territory (and even stretching beyond it). As we know, this momentous internal secession was the consequence of the political fragmentation that followed the collapse of the Roman empire. Beginning as early as the 10th century, the mercantile estate found the productive shelter it needed in the rubble of fiefdoms that emerged from that enormous collapse. Very gradually, there arose from the widening importance of mercantile dealings, and from the increasing dependence of all levels of society on the market mechanism, the foundations of a regime of capital itself. On the land, surplus continued to be gathered through the lord's political domination over the serf, but in the towns and cities, surplus more and more welled up in the form of profits accruing to merchant traders, later in merchant guilds. Guildsmen who constituted briefly a kind of open society of independent producers in the 12th century were the rich masters of many trades, and, by the 16th century, the dominant group in all cities. Thus even before capitalism emerged in full dress, the appearance of a world of business presaged its entrance within late feudal Europe.

Samir Amin has coined the term "incomplete tributary societies" to describe feudalism.[6] The term suggests that the logic of feudalism was to remedy its incompletion by seeking self-sufficiency through military and dynastic struggles and alliances. Out of this unstable milieu—there were some 500 more or less autonomous political units in Europe in 1500—there emerged the cluster of strong military-administrative units that would reduce the political crazy-quilt to a mere 25 members by the year 1900.[7] The mercantile world itself, it should be noted, experienced the same unifying pressures that brought about the forced agglomeration of petty fiefdoms into kingdoms, so that the petty merchantdoms of the 12th century grew by the 15th century into the vast operations of the Bardi and Peruzzi and Medici and the merchant bankers of Augsburg, then into the East India Companies, the Turkey Company, and the global commercial operations of the 18th century.

From the viewpoint of the formation of two realms of society, we see with increasing clarity the appearance of two interdependent and yet rivalrous structures within this extended period. One of these structures retained the ancient trappings and much of the military power of the original imperium and was vested with the formal responsibility of enforcing the will of the state, both through its monopoly of legal violence and its position of moral authority. At a crucial point in the 17th and 18th centuries this public realm also assumed a command function to force modernization upon the still timid economic sphere—Colbert and Frederick the Great are exemplars of this early *dirigisme*. To the economic sphere itself, without any formal recognition of the fact, was consigned the task of superintending the daily work of the population and of amassing the surplus of which the state itself was a main beneficiary.

---

[6] See Samir Amin, *Class and Nation* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980).

[7] Cited in Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1981), p. 187.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The emergence of an autonomous economic realm had two aspects. One was the long and tortuous achievement of political rights for the bourgeoisie. This did not run its course until the late 18th century, when the full foundation was laid for a regime of capital—namely, the recognition of clear "constitutional" constraints on the power of the state to violate the private space of the individual or to commandeer his or her property. This principle of *de jure* equality, with its closely associated right of "private" property, formed the basis of the liberal polity. It was also this general exclusion of state power from the workings of the marketplace and from the accumulation process that prevented the state—and still prevents it—from being able to control, other than superficially, the competitive pressures resulting from the mutual encroachment of capitals.

But this familiar story of political gain was matched by a less familiar one of economic loss. This was the state's gradual loss of its rights of direct access to surplus. Save in unusual circumstances, the state lost its command over the labor or materials, or even the money, by which it traditionally assembled its secular, religious, or military might. Thus even though the state retained the ultimate weaponry of rule and the authority of awe, it became dependent on the operation of its self-created republic for the nourishment of revenues.

The power to tax may be the power to destroy, but the ability to tax presupposes the existence of a working economy. It is for this reason that the regime of capital is the dominant, active influence in the normal relationship between the two realms, and it is why the state is normally its obliging servant. Self-interest, not weakness, drives the state to support and advance the accumulation of capital.

WHAT WE FIND in capitalism, then, is a new form of regime in which the central organizing economic structure is divorced from the direct access to the means of violence that has always been the prerogative of the state. This reflects, at the level of national power, the absence of direct coercion that is also characteristic of capital's power at the work surface of society.

It is hardly surprising, under these circumstances, that a tension between the remaining apparatus of state domination and the new structure of economic domination lies at the very heart of capitalism, vastly complicating the task of defining the relationship of state and economy. The older form of domination still "contains" the newer form, but imperfectly and uneasily; and the newer form imbues the older one with its historic mission and purpose—the accumulation of private wealth—but only partially and subject to exception. □

The Poetics of Biblical Narrative

Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading

By Meir Sternberg

By refining both old and new approaches to the study of the Hebrew Bible and its narrative discourse, Sternberg opens up new insights into the greatest and most original work in the narrative tradition of world literature.

Indiana Literary Biblical Series

$57.50

The Wandering Jew

Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend

Edited by Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes

Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes have collected for the first time in a single volume the most representative interpretations of the legend of the Wandering Jew. "The best single survey of the subject." —*Dov Noy*, Hebrew University

$27.50

Grandma Never Lived in America

The New Journalism of Abraham Cahan

Edited with an Introduction by Moses Rischin

Abraham Cahan (1860-1951) was a novelist, journalist, and translator. A self-conscious immigrant, Jew, Russian, and American, Cahan was both an important chronicler of New York's rich ethnic multiplicity and a spokesman for it.

$19.95

INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS

TENTH AND MORTON STREETS
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA 47405

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Michael Rustin

What Labour Did in Office

An Exclusive Report on Britain's 1988 Election

In the general election that took place in the spring of 1988, Mrs. Thatcher was eventually defeated. The dominant issue was unemployment, as it had been for two or three years prior to the election, since the end of the miners' strike. While Mrs. Thatcher had in 1987 introduced substantial tax cuts, and a much less substantial capital spending program with the declared aim of "tackling unemployment now that we have conquered the problem of inflation once and for all," this was perceived by most as unconvincing and cynical. Having staked so much on her "prudent housekeeping" approach to government spending, it was difficult for Thatcher to reverse course just before an election. Unlike Mondale in the 1984 American presidential election, faced with a comparable preelection boom and budget deficit, the opposition parties in Britain did not denounce the deficit as irresponsible but said it was too little and too late. As so often before, the election was won and lost in the two or three years that preceded it, and not during the campaign itself.

While the Labour party increased its share of the poll by 7 percent from the 1983 level, to 35 percent, this was not enough to give it a clear majority. The Liberal/Social Democratic Alliance also gained an additional 2 percent of the national vote, and there was evidence of considerable party- and vote-switching where Alliance or Labour candidates seemed to have the best chance of winning. The Liberals made more of the running in the Alliance than in 1979, finding it easier in the more strongly anti-Thatcherite climate, and David Owen, the leader of the Social Democratic party, was made less effective by his earlier endorsements of aspects of the Thatcherite philosophy. David Steel, the Liberal leader, showed an explicit willingness to discuss coalition with Labour, and this probably encouraged Alliance voters to vote Labour in areas where Labour had previously come in second to the Tories, especially where there was a Social Democratic rather than a Liberal candidate. Since Thatcher and her supporters for the time being retained their dominant position in the Conservative party, there was little alternative to some kind of coalition. The Labour party used the alternative option of a minority government, followed by an early dissolution to force optimal terms out of the Alliance.

Employment and the Economy

EMPLOYMENT POLICY was the first priority for government action, since it was mainly on their failures in this area that the Conservatives had been defeated. There were now nearly 4 million unemployed, and there had been further inner-city riots in 1986. The most radical step taken by the new government was a commitment to provide a year's employment to everyone who had been registered as unemployed for over six months. The government decided that a declaration of principle of this kind was required, especially if it were to succeed in obtaining the

---

This is a slightly condensed and adapted version of the Afterword of *For a Pluralist Socialism*, by Michael Rustin, copyright © 1985 by Michael Rustin, and published in May by Verso in London. The book is available in the U.S. from Schocken Books, Inc., and it will be published in the U.S. in September. The excerpt appears with the permission of the publisher, Verso.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cooperation of the unions for some kind of de facto incomes policy.

Regional Employment Commissions were set up, on a tripartite government, industry, and union basis, to develop productive employment. These commissions were to propose capital programs (railway insulation, sewer reconstruction, house repair and neighborhood improvement, railway electrification, upgrading of provincial airports, the hydroelectric Severn Barrage tidal dam, and so on). Since many of these programs were of their nature long-term and would require more skilled workers in the construction (and related) industries, it was also agreed to link the existing Youth Training scheme and other new vocational training programs more closely to the expected manpower demands of these schemes, thus lessening the pointlessness of training where there were no employment prospects.

The Regional Commissions were also authorized to allocate specified funds for short-term employment subsidies to private firms, depending on the level of unemployment in each region. These subsidies were set at something less than the estimated exchequer cost of each unemployed person, in unemployment benefits and foregone tax revenues. It was agreed to expand community and health-care services, as part of an expansion of preventive and community medicine. These programs were related to the increasing number of old people in the population, aiming to provide better social infrastructures for community care. Encouragement was also given to voluntary organizations in these areas, on the grounds that these were a low-cost way of improving social welfare, and that the more expensive professional workers should be deployed to make the greatest use of these resources. These programs, and their multiplier effects in the economy, did bring a reduction in unemployment of 1.5 million in just over a year.

The encouragement of voluntary early retirement—for example by a scheme that conferred a right to a reduction of working hours to half-time at the age of 60 for those who had been in employment with a firm for more than five years—also had a favorable effect on employment figures. The half-time provision introduced a more flexible approach to the final years of work and was accompanied by a small offsetting increase in part-time employment beyond the age of 65. The introduction of a universal education and training allowance for 16- to 18-year-olds, as Labour had proposed while in opposition, effectively removed this age group from the employment rolls.

The government set up a National Investment Bank, as had long been proposed by the Trade Union Congress, and offered tax-free bonds to the public as a way of raising capital for it. For the first time this provided tax advantages for lending to industrial investment (with a ceiling of £40,000 per person), to offset the advantages hitherto given (via the tax relief on mortgage interest and other tax exemptions for owner-occupied dwellings) to domestic property. While one effect of this was simply to divert savings from building societies to the new fund, it did increase net savings. It also helped achieve an increase in the rate of capital formation in the early years of the new government without inflationary effect. Labour gained some credit for the introduction of this idea of popular shares in industrial wealth, having been so badly outflanked by the Conservatives over council-house ownership.

The new government devalued the pound, reimposed exchange controls upon assuming office, and greatly restricted outward movement of capital. It took reserve powers to impose an import license system, whereby importers would have to pay a sliding-scale premium for foreign currency purchases that would vary depending on the balance of trade in each quarter. The government sought to maintain the lower value of sterling against other currencies, in order to encourage trade competitiveness; but the exchange rate was too vulnerable to non-trade-related speculation to be an adequate instrument on its own. The import licenses were intended as a trade-balancing measure, and defended as nonprotectionist in the sense that there would be no tariff when trade was in balance.

Economic growth of 6 percent was achieved in the first year of the new government (the Thatcher government having only managed a level of 2.75 percent in its last full year), and 5 percent in the second. The import-license

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scheme was invoked after nine months, to head off an impending balance-of-payments crisis.

The major industries denationalized by the Thatcher government—British Airways, British Telecom, et al.—were retaken into public ownership. A major condition exacted by the Liberal/SDP Alliance was an insistence that a measure of competition with the private sector be preserved in each case. Since this was thought likely to improve the efficiency and thus the defensibility of the public sector in the long run, this concession caused little controversy.

The National Investment Bank (NIB) was close in its conception to the earlier National Enterprise Board, but there were competing pressures on it for the allocation of its capital resources. The government chose to concentrate on investment in "sunrise" industries and new technologies, and gave as one reason for this the need to earn enough to ensure a proper return on savings to bondholders (though in practice the fixed-interest return was guaranteed by government). It also set up a smaller Cooperative Investment Bank, to encourage worker-ownership. With some success it devolved the task of short-term employment creation to the Regional Employment Commissions, shortly to become part of elected regional authorities. There was widespread recognition that these investment measures could only be effective given time and that, at the very least, Labour, with or without the Alliance, must aim to remain in office for at least two terms.

Closely linked with the hi-tech role of the National Investment Bank was a considerable expansion of the funds provided for technological research. The government announced that it intended to divert industrial research capacity from defense to civilian purposes. A new Industrial Research Agency was given a substantial budget, which could be allocated either on a "matching-grant" basis to private or public corporations, or as smaller grants to academic institutions pursuing technological projects prior to their direct industrial applications. Realizing the shortage of skilled management, especially in the public sector, the government also introduced funding for post-graduate sandwich courses in a number of institutions, by which economics, business, and engineering graduates could take programs in conjunction with placements in industry or in public economic agencies. One object of these schemes was to generate high-quality managers and planners, especially for the public and government sector.

Trade Unions

THE LABOUR PARTY FACED a real problem in how to fulfill the interests of the trade unions while in coalition with the Liberals and the SDP. An incomes policy was made a condition of the formation of the Coalition. But the TUC, battered after nine years of Thatcherism, was prepared to accept this (under another name) as a trade-off both for the employment-creation programs and for the return of the trade unions to a more prominent public role. (The success of the Australian Labour government's program of an incomes policy for economic expansion had increased the attractiveness of this option in Britain.) The TUC negotiated a two-year agreement providing that wage increases should not exceed 1.5 percent of the going rate of inflation during that period. There was also a provision for a tax penalty for firms who paid over the odds, which in practice was sparingly deployed. The trade unions were co-opted into the Regional Employment Commissions, and at more grass-roots levels some energies were diverted into Alternative Plan initiatives supported by the new Cooperative Bank.

Funds were made available for paid educational leaves and for an expansion of one-year full-time trade-union education programs. These were related to the idea that the trade unions should develop a more positive role in industrial planning and management. While no majority existed in Parliament for the repeal of legislation requiring ballots for strike action and for the allocation of funds for political purposes, the improved status of the trade unions under the new government, and recognition that their restraint was vital to the new reconstruction, made it easier for some unions to retain their members' support for political funds. Trade-union membership also began to grow again as unemployment diminished, a not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

insignificant gain. And a requirement of shareholders' ballots to authorize company gifts for political purposes reduced company funding of the Conservative party.

The impotence of the unions under Thatcher, and the number of severe industrial defeats they had suffered during that period, had produced a shift of emphasis from trade-union to political means of advancing working-class interests. The government this time wisely chose to spend its early capital on political measures rather than on inflationary wage rises, as Labour had done in 1974. Another factor leading to this tougher government attitude was the less-than-happy experience of some Labour metropolitan authorities with their own town-hall unions.

Important measures in winning working-class support for the government were its first budgets. These removed lower income groups from income-tax liability and made the tax system somewhat more progressive again. There was a small increase in the basic rate of income tax. The government said it had little to give away because of the priority of industrial reconstruction, but that it would, unlike its predecessor, be fair. Tax relief on new mortgages (and after two years on existing ones) would be limited to relief at the standard rate of tax. The Labour party did not forget in these years that concern for working-class living standards was the precondition for its unity and electoral survival. If inflation was to be contained, it was understood that social justice had to be pursued through the tax system.

The Constitution

IT WAS CLEAR AT THE OUTSET of negotiations between the coalition partners that Labour was not willing to concede Proportional Representation, and would go ahead with a minority government if the Alliance insisted on making that a decisive issue "at this stage." "There are higher priorities," said the Labour party, and "in any case, if the electorate had wanted this they would not have voted for us as the largest single party."

The Proportional Representation issue was left in abeyance for two years, but at the end of this time the Alliance announced its intention of fighting a cluster of three forthcoming by-elections wholly on this question. Since these elections did not endanger the government's majority, and the Alliance said it would engage in no anti-Labour campaigning other than on this issue (Labour had successfully insisted from the first on abstention from antisocialist speech-making as a condition for Alliance members remaining in the government), this was an ingenious strategy. Labour lost one seat to the Liberals on this issue, and lost votes in the other two constituencies. That decided the issue, and soon afterward the Labour prime minister announced that the government would introduce legislation to provide for the next general election to take place by Proportional Representation.

The government also instituted state funding for political parties represented in Parliament (in proportion to their share of the vote), and increased the funding for the staff and office expenses of MPs. It also introduced a new form of short-term civil-service contract, to coincide with the life of a Parliament, and declared the intention to use this to increase the expertise and "industrial experience" of civil servants. In practice, as intended, this was used in part to increase the role of political appointees in government. Similar measures were taken at local-government and regional-government levels. The structure of the permanent civil service and local government services continued only little changed, but these new appointments were a significant innovation in high-priority areas, such as industrial development, and in strengthening the planning resources of ministers.

The Government and the Intellectuals: Reinvention of the Royal Commission

THE GOVERNMENT SUCCEEDED in wedding the radical intelligentsia more firmly to its cause than had its Labour predecessors, both by the recruitment of advisers and the reinvention of the Royal Commission after a long period of disuse of this institution under Thatcher. Protesting that it was determined not to "run out of steam" after one term, the government began to set up a number of Royal Commissions and Committees of Inquiry to make recom-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mendations in a number of areas it deemed important. One of these was a Royal Commission on the Press, whose terms of reference included the issues of monopoly powers, quality, and democratic access. Its principal recommendations were a stringent antimonopoly rule, which prohibited the ownership of more than one national and Sunday newspaper, and more than one local newspaper operating in a given area, by the same company. It also proposed significant tax-exemptions for newspapers operated as nonprofit trusts.

Another commission worked on the subject of the production and distribution of television and film, including cable. This produced recommendations for a "public-highway" concept of cable, funded by license fee, in which the basic technical infrastructure would be funded through British Telecom. Programs would be provided alternatively by the BBC or new regional public stations, out of license income or by commercial providers using advertisements on the lines of the existing independent television companies. In accepting these recommendations, the government announced that it wanted to preserve the existing "mixed economy" in broadcasting, but with a greater diversity of channels, to ensure that all citizens retained access from their basic license fee to all programs. It argued that the indirect benefits of cable—through interactive home shopping, travel booking, and other information services where additional charges could be levied through the use, not the reception, of information—would more than justify the "free" provision of the basic service. The larger the numbers who had access to these systems the lower the average cost, and the more activity they would generate. It was a classic case of a "public good."

The commission also recommended generous government funding of an enlarged National Film Finance Corporation, whose aim was to secure a long-run expansion through education, training, and direct investment, of film- and program-making capacity. The BBC and the national theater companies show that public funding can work, said the government. This Royal Commission had as members some of the leading figures of recent radical debate on mass communications, as well as practitioners. By holding public hearings, which attracted considerable participation and publicity, it was able to generate political debate (distraction, some said) parallel with the government's more immediate activities.

A Royal Commission was also set up on taxation, which made recommendations for a drastic simplification of the tax and benefit system, and for a negative income tax to replace the existing host of means-tested benefits. On the capital side, it proposed a more equitable distribution of capital, both individually (an extension of worker share-ownership schemes and regional extensions of the investment bond idea) and collectively, arguing that trade-union or other workers' representatives should have more say in decisions on pension-fund investment.

A Royal Commission on the Family—with membership drawn from single-issue campaigns in the welfare field, the personal social services, and the churches, and including some prominent feminists—recommended improvements in family support services (day care, domiciliary care for the old, and an infant/child benefit allowance for parents of under-fives), on the grounds that these would strengthen rather than weaken family structure. It also recommended specific measures to protect women (for example, the collection through the tax system of the contributions of deserting husbands for the maintenance of their children). This combination of an active welfare policy, an equal-rights approach to gender, and a positive approach toward the family in its variable forms won mainstream support. This proved a successful way of preempting neoconservative concerns over the family.

The government also set up a Committee on Community and Preventive Health, saying that it wanted to set positive goals for the improvement of public health standards. It wanted to establish "benchmarks," it said, so that we can know how much progress we have made after five years in improving the health of our people. This committee investigated a range of environmental, occupational, and preventive health problems, and it made recommendations in a number of areas, including infant mortality and malnutrition, deaths and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

illness associated with tobacco (no more advertising or sponsorship), road safety (including more stringent legislation for the design of vehicles and on driving and alcohol), heart disease and diet. These were linked with an increase in expenditure on the National Health Service, but were also seen as the most cost-effective means of improving health.

The sixth of this unexpected series of Committees of Inquiry and Royal Commissions (government by sociologists, said some Tories) concerned policing, crime rates, and penal policy, especially in relation to inner-city areas. This commission brought together one or two of the more liberal police commissioners and prison wardens, civil rights lawyers, and academics, with some representation from the immigrant communities. In a major report, the commission argued that the breakdown of social relationships was the crucial factor generating crime and disorder. It predictably supported "community" concepts of policing the stability and improvement of neighborhoods as likely to lead to less crime and insecurity. It pointed out that the switch from comprehensive redevelopment schemes to piecemeal housing improvement might already be reducing problems associated with rapid social transition—problems of loneliness and mental illness as well as vandalism and crime.

The commission recommended the strengthening of community cohesiveness through the decentralization of council services, and it supported the proposal for establishment of elected neighborhood councils with small spending powers, in the hope that this would increase community integration. It argued that attention needed to be given to the quality of relationships established between teenagers and teachers and other involved adults. This required research into the effects of the impersonality of very large schools, and it might require, in the most difficult areas, much better staffing ratios (perhaps making use of auxiliaries) than were then the norm. It urged attention to the design of public space, including council estates (local government-funded housing), to prevent areas of dereliction. (In a typically francophile SDP touch, a remark in the report commended the social role of the concierge.)

There was also an interesting suggestion for the appointment of neighborhood street wardens, perhaps paid out of the police budget, as a low-cost form of community policing, or under the jurisdiction of elected neighborhood councils. These wardens would patrol a few streets where they lived, getting to know the neighbors, and report on "suspicious circumstances." They would have lapel radios, to enable them to call for help and to protect them from assault, and residents would be encouraged to tell them when they were going away. Like lollipop men and women (part-time wardens at school crossings who direct traffic with lollipop-shaped signs), the report said—the posts might suit retired people (anyway in quieter areas). It seemed a way of strengthening community ties and information, where these were lacking.

The report argued for a preventive law-and-order philosophy, pointing out the documented cost and futility of prisons and other custodial sentences. These might be necessary deterrents, the report said, but they certainly do no good to the inmates. The key test, the government stated later, was whether preventive measures could reduce crime rates, and it set up a fuller and more public monitoring system, by local-government area, to test this. The government meanwhile took steps to reduce the prison population and attempted to redirect resources in the direction of preventive action. The problem in pursuing this preventive approach to health and social order was how to make statistical improvements as meaningful to the public as is the individual case of a heart transplant or an exemplary penal sentence, which gains more media attention and distorts resource allocation. In taking problems of "law and order" seriously, the authors of the report attempted to turn conservative anxieties that are focused on the decline of moral community life into support for positive social policies.

These reports and investigations succeeded in winning public attention through their use of public meetings, and especially of radio and television, for their hearings. They were seen as long-term agenda-setting and educational devices. The government wanted to avoid charges of government secrecy and elitism (it had legislated on Freedom of Information, sensibly en-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trusting this issue to a Liberal cabinet member), and therefore it favored this greater openness. Some thought it would be a harmless diversion for radical intellectuals to involve themselves with such long-term programs instead of the contentious problems of the present. At all events, these committees did generate a momentum of new issues and recommendations, and showed that this venerable constitutional instrument could be adapted to more democratic times.

Foreign Policy

THE NEW GOVERNMENT WAS ABLE to reach agreement on a philosophy of *minimum* nuclear deterrence, combined with the preservation of military "balance" with the East. It was agreed that the only nuclear weapons to be retained on British territory would be seaborne, and the objective was to transfer this force as rapidly as possible to joint European command. The peace movement was persuaded to acknowledge this as at least a step in the right direction by the commitment to remove Cruise missiles from Britain within six months. As the defense secretary said, "the one good thing about having missiles on trucks is that they can go out as quickly as they came in."

Agreement was also reached that no nuclear weapons would be deployed on U.S. or British aircraft based in the U.K. The international climate had fortunately improved, as a result in part of a realization that the arms burden was damaging Western economies and the political stability of their governments even more than those of the Eastern bloc. Moves to economic decentralization in the U.S.S.R. following Chernenko's death had also brought some improvements in the Eastern-bloc economy, where there was considerable unfulfilled potential blocked by inefficiency (and more room for rapid improvement than in the West). This in turn produced greater pressure and stimulus for competing economic expansion in Western Europe.

The return of a minority SPD government in West Germany, dependent on Green support or abstention, also made it imperative for the West to adopt a more conciliatory stance toward the U.S.S.R. in Europe, and also made a more expansionary economic approach possible in the EEC. Since some tangible progress was being made in limited arms reductions, the government was not much attacked from the left on defense issues. The official departure of the Cruise missile was the occasion of a large peace festival. These developments also produced more positive attitudes in the Labour party toward the Common market.

How Did the Government Succeed?

THE GOVERNMENT SUCCEEDED in holding together for four years, and went to the country in 1992 under the new Proportional Representation system. Labour improved its share of the vote by a further 3 percent, to 38 percent, after this period of fairly popular and constructive government but, of course, under the PR system it finished up with a lesser number of seats, though still as the largest single party. "If we hadn't gone over to PR, we might have won outright," said left critics, but it was clear that these results couldn't be fairly extrapolated to that situation. After the 1992 election, the SDP and the Liberal party merged.

The most important factor contributing to the government's success had been the radically reduced expectations brought about by the Thatcher years. Themes of reintegration of the community, of decentralization and democratization, and of consistent but slow rebuilding of the economy succeeded in maintaining majority support. After so many years of strident "possessive individualism," the country was now receptive to a more ethical and integrative approach. Living standards of those in work only improved slightly in the first three years of the government (more rapidly in the preelection period); but there was a substantial improvement in the living conditions of the previously unemployed, and necessary capital formation was generated in both the public and private sectors.

The Labour party gained in organizational strength through the establishment of public funding for parties, and through the new regional authorities, and the TUC gained in authority through the government's return to "tripartism." The government attempted to meet criticisms from the left of "bureaucrat-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ism" and "corporatism" by making possible trade-union participation in the regional development agencies and training bodies, and by giving some support to workers' cooperatives and buy-outs of divisions of private companies threatened with closure.

But the main result of the dependence of Labour on the Alliance was the impossibility of restoring the trade unions' previous privileges. To this extent Thatcherism had had a lasting effect. This and internal changes in the Labour party after 1979 strengthened the role of the party vis-à-vis the trade unions in the labor movement. The more political and corporatist role the trade unions have taken in the more stable European social democracies (Sweden and Austria, for example) came to England as the best option available to the trade unions after the hammering they had taken from Thatcherism. On the other hand, monetarism had been wholly discredited, and as a result of the Thatcher defeat it was possible for the government to give priority to the production of goods and services, over the financial sector.

The government succeeded in appropriating some populist themes that Thatcherism had made its own. The most important of these was democracy and "letting the people decide," through a return to greater autonomy for local government, and through regional and local decentralization. But the emphasis on the values of community, concern for the value of life in preventive health care and welfare schemes, and social support for the family also engaged some sentiments recently orchestrated most effectively by the right.

The commitment to investment and growth and a continuing rhetoric of efficiency in the public services also paid tribute to the revival of market values, though the government's employment-creation schemes and mildly redistributive tax policies made it vulnerable to the usual criticisms of diminishing "incentives" and waste of public resources. It turned out that the earlier class alliance of working-class equalitarianism and "new-middle-class" public rationality was still viable against a background of Thatcherite devastation.

Surprisingly, the Coalition was less liable to retreat on policy than the previous Labour governments had been. Because policy differences were argued between competing parties, rather than in the secrecy of the cabinet, it proved possible for the Labour party to hold its leaders to their declared policies. While Alliance "intransigence" was exploited on some occasions as an excuse by the Labour right to abandon positions they did not want to defend anyway, Labour generally remained aware that it had to look after its own constituency first. The prime minister's position was also weaker under this more pluralist arrangement, and this gave the left more leverage, within the overall limits of Coalition policy, than it recently had when in office.

Labour was to some extent protected by its Coalition partners from accusations of socialist extremism (once it had been clarified that the government aimed to last the full term, and that its members would not openly discredit each other). On this basis, significant reversals of Thatcher legislation, notably over public ownership, were carried through in key sectors. The key gain for the Alliance, and especially the Liberals, was the adoption of Proportional Representation, and for this they were prepared to make significant concessions. The advantage to Labour of delaying the passage of decision on PR until late in the session of Parliament was that the Alliance dared not risk the defeat of the government until it was passed. This bargaining card enabled Labour to take a strong position within the Coalition, and the benefit was a significant recovery in its share of the vote.

It was not, as some on the left said after the second election victory of 1992, socialism, but at least it was a move forward again. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Richard Lowenthal

A Search for Socialism

An Old Friend Looks Back at Henry Pachter's Writings

Henry Pachter was both a historical scholar who combined an unusual breadth of horizon with deep originality of thought, and a profoundly engaged, lifelong socialist. It is therefore fitting that this second collection of his essays to appear after his death should be called *Socialism in History*.* But it seems to me also appropriate that a discussion of this book in the magazine for which he wrote for many years, and which shared and still shares his commitment to critical and independent socialist thought, should primarily deal with the question of just what that commitment meant to him.

This concentration of my remarks on what I regard as Henry Pachter's central and abiding concern is in no way caused by a lack of appreciation for his many other interests, of which this book contains striking proof. On the contrary, I am convinced that Pachter's interest in the general history of our time or in the study of the ideas of Karl Marx and of outstanding later Marxists has given rise to thoughts of evident relevance to his socialist concern.

Such historical essays as Pachter's highly original contribution on "The Problem of Imperialism," his penetrating analysis of the role of propaganda in the fascist technique of conquering power, his fiercely independent effort to do justice to the fate of the Palestinians, and his moving 1965 reflections as he looked back at the Spanish Civil War are by themselves sufficient to make the book fascinating reading. So are such "Marxological" gems as the striking portraits of Antonio Gramsci and Georg Lukács, and the subtle analysis of the relation between "Marx and the Jews," which neither attacks nor defends Marx's endlessly debated early pamphlet "Zur Judenfrage," but puts it in the context of the development of Marx's personality and his broader view of the world. But while I am happy to commend this wealth of insights to general attention, it is the nature of Henry Pachter's commitment to socialism that I propose to discuss here—however imperfectly.

In doing so, I make no claim that my interpretation of Pachter's views should be more "authentic" than anyone else's. The mere fact that I have known Pachter longer than other surviving friends of his American years—only excepting his wife Hedwig—does not legitimate such a claim, and that for two reasons, one general and one particular to my case. The general reason is, of course, that our friendship, like probably all of Pachter's friendships, was based not on continuous and assured agreement, but on ever-renewed argument.

The particular reason in my case is that since the time when we first met in the Berlin of the '20s as Communist students, we have developed differently—not, I feel, in fundamental political outlook, but geographically, "organizationally," and in the relative weight of our activities. I returned to Germany from Britain, where I survived the later years of Hitler's rule and his entire war, first as a journalist, and later again as a university teacher, and have been an active German Social Democrat since my pre-British underground days. Henry got out of France, his first exile, in time to survive the war in the United States, and he remained there—in a country where an effective political force committed to socialism did not and does not exist.

The difference in our respective postwar habitats converged with the differences of our temperaments and of the activities to which we inclined: Henry had not only the erudition but also the temperament of the born scholar, never provoked by different opinions unless his opponent showed manifest insincerity or low motives. Thus his political activity, almost wholly confined to writing and debate in small circles, was directed to the unvary-

* *Socialism in History: Political Essays of Henry Pachter.* Edited and with an Introduction by Stephen Eric Bronner. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984. 361 pp. $25.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing aim of telling the truth to those willing to hear or read it rather than to the achievement of results in the conflicts of the moment.

As for me, I also eventually became a professional scholar, and never wished to become a professional politician; but I had, and still have, some of the temper of a party man, and have tried again and again to influence the policy of my party, to support it in public or to criticize it. Thus it will be obvious that I am not the "natural" interpreter of Henry's way of thought—except inasmuch as my consciousness of the differences between us may help me to watch out for my own bias.

Let me then begin, book in hand, to ask what socialism meant to Henry Pachter. Obviously, it started from Marx—from both his analytical teachings and his vision of the revolutionary future. Just as obviously, his was never a "Marxism" of a deterministic "scientific" guarantee of that future, such as many Social Democrats still believed in throughout the first third of our century, and as did many Communists as long as they believed in anything. Pachter, I think, was immunized against that pseudoscientific determinism by his study of history in general and by his teacher Karl Korsch in particular; and he always understood that the real historical insights of Marx did not depend on this philistine interpretation.

But if the socialist goal was not predetermined by the "laws of history," it was necessary to define the driving force that *could* bring it about and to define the goal itself more precisely than Marx had been willing to do. To Marx, of course, the driving force was the struggle of the exploited workers for their emancipation—and that motivation has remained a vital hope of socialist movements in all countries, at all times, and of all tendencies, from Eduard Bernstein to Lenin. But by the 1920s, when Pachter started to think about those problems, it seemed obvious that this factor did not necessarily assure the revolution in times of crisis—and it was to become even more obvious after Hitler's victory. Another driving force was needed—not instead of "class interest" but in addition to it: a moral force.

There have, of course, always been ethical socialists. But since the onset of fascism and nazism, recognition of the moral element in socialism has ceased to be a particular "tendency" within the movement. (I still remember the impact Ignazio Silone's *Bread and Wine* had on many European socialists, including myself, in the early days of Hitler.) This comes out very strikingly in the Epilogue to the book we are discussing—an essay entitled "Confessions of an Old-Timer: Aphorisms on Socialism," first published in the Winter 1958 *Dissent*.

There Pachter announces that the criterion of a socialist is the assumption that "Man is good." He at once corrects the seeming naiveté by stating that the proposition "is neither true nor untrue": it can be validated by those who believe and act on it, or invalidated by the faint-hearted. What Pachter really means, then, is not the anthropological nonsense that man is, or can be made, morally perfect, but that men and women, imperfect as they are, are capable of making a moral effort—and that the chances for mankind, including the chances of socialism, depend on that effort. A socialist, then, in Pachter's view, is one who is willing to make that effort and to help others make it: this was one great achievement of the movement as he saw it, and to which he felt bound.

Now while the moral imperative that Pachter shows here as a root of socialist action is not exclusive or sectarian, it is an imperative for an individual who is committed to the movement—an imperative of solidarity. It is this relation between the cohesion of the movement and the community of its values that has struck Henry Pachter most positively in his otherwise rather mixed judgment on "The Ambiguous Legacy of Eduard Bernstein" —the latest-written essay in this book, published in *Dissent* shortly after the author's death. After making clear that the socialism of the founder of German socialist "revisionism" was not based on an explicit moral philosophy, though a number of moral philosophers supported it, Pachter points out that Bernstein "drew his ethical directives from the life of the party. His values were *solidarity, justice, equality, liberty, progress*."

Clearly, Bernstein was right in recognizing that the workers' fighting spirit did not depend on their material grievances alone, but on their link with those common values imbibed in the organized socialist movement, and Pachter agrees with him on this point. But for Pachter, and for me, that leaves the unsolved question of why this movement did not achieve a decisive socialist transformation of society—and the underlying question of what such a transformation could really be like.

In one of his earlier great essays, included in this collection—"Three Economic Models: Capitalism, the Welfare State, and Socialism," published in the Spring 1964 *Dissent*—Pachter offers an original vision of the socialist goal: an economic system in which the cost of "fixed capital," of factories,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

machinery, and so on, only counts when it is newly created but not for purposes of amortization, so that income on dead capital can disappear without economic damage. I confess that, despite repeated readings, I have been unable to understand this argument. True, although I studied economics in my youth, I am not a trained economist by modern standards, but I am not sure that Pachter was one either. I do understand, however, that this vision of a "socialist economy" presupposes either its worldwide simultaneous introduction or its complete isolation from other economies—both utopian assumptions in the strict sense that their achievement is inherently impossible. It also presupposes that a high level of consumer satisfaction and an assured limitation of population growth, together, would remove any need for serious economic growth. In short, it is a vision of socialism too remote from the actuality of economic life on this planet to have any chance of becoming the goal of a broad political and social movement, let alone the program for its victory.

The real economic achievements of democratic socialist movements in our time have been the achievements of Keynesian economics, which neither abolished capital profits nor economic inequality but, during the quarter-century of 1947–72, brought about a steady high level of employment, an extension of social security, and a rise in the standard of living of the working masses in the industrially advanced democracies unprecedented in the world's history. They were often achieved in cooperation with "enlightened" economists and politicians of the capitalist camp, but for many years went together with a steady strengthening of the labor movement's influence—hence the widespread talk of a "social democratic consensus."

This evolution produced among the West German Social Democrats the revival of Eduard Bernstein's ideas that puzzled Henry Pachter and moved him to write his last essay. West Germany introduced Keynesian economic techniques only under the Grand Coalition of 1966, when the Social Democrat Karl Schiller became minister of economics—but it had profited from international Keynesianism for many years before. When, in 1959, while still in opposition, the German Social Democrats adopted the Godesberg Program, they did not use Bernstein's formula that "the movement is everything, the goal nothing," which, as Pachter rightly recalls, Bernstein himself corrected as misleading; they said that socialism was not a final state but an unending task, a direction in which one had to work again and again in ever new and often unforeseeable situations. The direction was indicated by the basic values of freedom, justice, and solidarity—a fair sample of the five values of Bernstein's quoted by Pachter.

While Pachter was quite right in pointing out, toward the end of his essay, that the welfare state required much more cooperation between the "social partners" than it had in Bernstein's generation, I think he was wrong in suggesting that the German Social Democrats had lost more of "their original moral impetus" after World War II than during the Weimar Republic. They achieved much more in strengthening the stability of their democracy; they achieved very much more in advancing the rights, the living conditions, and the social security of the workers; and they brought about a normalization of relations with their Eastern neighbors, even while remaining loyal to the alliance of the Western democracies: all these were precisely *moral* achievements—and by no means easy ones.

Yet ultimately, that last essay of Pachter's comes much closer to the view from which I have

SOCIALISM IN HISTORY

POLITICAL ESSAYS OF HENRY PACHTER

Edited and with an Introduction by Stephen Eric Bronner. "To my mind, Henry Pachter was one of the most original and penetrative social observers and critics of our time. These essays show his powers at their height."—Robert L. Heilbroner.
"These essays are enduring contributions by one of the most powerful political intelligences of our time. To whatever theme he pursued, Henry Pachter brought humane imagination, unostentatious erudition, and uncommon insight. . . . This is a collection which offers intellectual rewards on each page." —Robert Lekachman. 361 pp., $30.00

Send check or money order to Dept. JN at the address below, including $2.00 per order for postage and handling.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS
136 South Broadway, Irvington, NY 10533

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been arguing here than to what I call his utopian vision of 1964. He had retained his profound distrust of violent revolution, except possibly against dictatorships; he no longer repeated the utopian vision; and he recognized both the democratic and the economic and social achievements of the "revisionist" policy—without regarding them either as sufficient from a socialist point of view or as assured for all time. It is this last and most disturbing point that was already proved by the course of history at the time his essay appeared.

Even during the period of the greatest democratic, economic, and social achievements in the advanced industrial nations, we did not live in anything like a "socialist" world. That was a hard fact not only because there existed hostile Communist dictatorships or suffering poor Third World countries; not only because, in the advanced Western countries, a large part of the major means of production was still owned privately and the public control of the economy severely limited—but because, thanks to all those factors, we had never ceased to live in a world of largely uncontrolled and unforeseeable dynamism. To be fair, it had been the awareness of this uncontrolled and unforeseeable dynamism and its dangers, along with the desire for an inherently stable order of human relations, that had led Pachter to his 1964 vision of the socialist goal that I have so harshly described as utopian.

The Deed Is Done!

• As we announced in our last issue, we are compelled to raise our prices:

Effective with the FALL 1985 issue

Single copy: $4.00

• One-year subscription: $15.00; two-year subscription: $27.00. (Special student rate: $10.00 for one year.) Add $4.00 for all foreign subscriptions for each year, including Canada. (All payments from foreign countries must be made in United States money orders or checks payable in U.S. currency.) Institutional rates: one year, $21.00; two years, $37.00.

In the last dozen years, many of the achievements of the period I have called the Keynesian quarter-century have fallen victim to this uncontrolled dynamism. Others are still threatened. In the Winter 1982 issue, *Dissent* published an article of mine on what was happening to the "Social Democratic Consensus"—to some extent another name for the Keynesian era. I described a number of the retrograde developments and tentatively suggested policies that might stop the dangerous trend; since then, the trend has continued and expanded. Henry Pachter did not live to see what has become the most massive wave of social and economic reaction in a long time.

Most readers will, no doubt, know only too well what I am talking about; for the others, the barest enumeration of factors will do. We may start with the Nixon shock to the world currency system, arising as a late consequence of the American inflation caused by the Vietnam War. Or we may start with the first oil shock caused by the Arab boycott in the course of the Yom Kippur War, and go on to OPEC's second oil shock, not caused by any political crisis but by the material success of the first. Or we may start with the new worldwide awareness of the ecological dangers caused by harmful industrial emissions and agricultural chemistry, and go on to the cost of belated countermeasures. We might also start with the growing role of the new industrial countries, a positive development in itself but inevitably upsetting the traditional international division of labor and causing crises for a number of once-leading industries in the "old" industrial countries.

There are, in addition, many serious secondary effects of those changes. There is the massive increase of indebtedness of a number of countries that had overcommitted their economies to rapid development before the tide turned—notably in Latin America and Eastern Europe. There is the growing tendency in Western industrial countries that had long prospered, thanks to comparatively free trade, to react with protectionist measures to the new competition from latecomers—and to extend this practice to the economic relations between the United States and Western Europe, and even to relations among West Europeans. There is the ominous threat that massive indebtedness may lead to a crisis of the banking systems of the creditor countries, and that protectionism may undermine the cooperation of the European Economic Community. Last but not least, there is the combination of massive unemployment in the declining industries with massive "labor saving" in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the new, high-tech industries, and—most strikingly in the United States—with the development of the principal source of new employment, the service trades, on the basis of substandard wages. Even where the post-Keynesian international recession has passed its low point, it leaves behind weakened trade unions, reduced social services, and a growing minority of what used to be the "working classes" suffering reproletarianization.

True, there is no fatal economic law that prevents the development of new solutions for these new economic and social problems. But while some partial solutions for real but passing troubles have been found, and may still be found, so far no general solutions are in sight. In these circumstances, the fact that some socialists begin to hanker back to a revolutionary solution at the very moment when socialist movements are weakest may be paradoxical, but it is not really surprising.

Some of this hankering for the lost socialist paradise of revolutionary illusions can be found in Stephen Eric Bronner's introduction to the collection of Pachter's essays in *Socialism in History.* In my view, among the many merits of his editing, the one weakness is that Bronner has insufficiently followed the evolution of Pachter's work in the course of time. He praises the 1964 attempt at a "model" of socialism, without taking adequate account of the fact that the later Pachter stated, for instance at the end of his 1978 essay on "Freedom, Authority, Participation," that "socialism today does not confront the capitalist model with a utopian model," but that it is "an open development of the economy based on an equally open movement for the betterment of living conditions." On the contrary, he charges that Pachter's vision in this essay is "both mechanical and static," and that "the moment of 'revolution' is lacking in Pachter's later works."

But Pachter had not *forgotten* that moment—he had *rejected* it because, in its Communist form, it had turned out to cause more permanent damage to human freedom than any benefit it could offer in the form of improved social security even in the best scenario. Pachter would admit it, despite its inherent dangers, only as a last resort for the victims of reactionary or fascist dictatorships, not for the citizens of badly governed democracies.

But there is another objection to the dream of socialist revolution—an objection Pachter did not mention but that may be of special importance in this period of reaction and of disappointment for democratic socialists. No revolution from below, as distinct from "revolutions" imposed from above, has *ever* taken place in an advanced industrial country, except the German demirevolution of 1918—and this is no accident: in a modern country, the suffering masses are afraid of an upheaval that might disrupt the complicated mechanism of transport and supplies, of health and public security, and so they prefer to look for major changes organized from above. Not even in modernized Spain after the death of Franco, with its immense emotional potential accumulated by the masses in many years of suffering, was there an attempt at revolution. On the contrary; the very memory of civil war and persecution convinced people of the need for a peaceful transition to democratic freedom—under a king.

Socialist critics of our present reactionary wave should not waste their energy on antiquated revolutionary dreams, but work both passionately and patiently for finding constructive economic solutions for our plight, and for winning democratic majorities for them. Here, too, Henry Pachter was right: There is no other way. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Courtesy United Automobile Workers of America

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

David Brody

The CIO After 50 Years

A Historical Reckoning

> Lewis did most of the talking. His voice was low, and he spoke with passion. He outlined the conditions in all of the major industries of the country. He emphasized that thousands upon thousands of workers were waiting with outstretched arms for unionization to come to them. Lewis then said, "And it can only come from you and you and you," as he dramatically punctuated his statement by stabbing his finger at each man seated around the table. He painted the breathtaking potentialities of a great labor movement embracing almost every workingman in the country . . . .
>
> As Lewis spoke, most of the food on the table went untouched and grew cold; but the men around the table were on fire. They too had caught the vision, and it became their gospel.

This is Saul Alinsky's account of the first meeting of industrial-union advocates the morning after the adjournment of the AFL convention at Atlantic City. Two weeks later, on November 9, 1935, John L. Lewis and his confederates formed the Committee for Industrial Organization. Never mind whether Alinsky's words are strictly accurate; they cast the founding of the CIO in the proper heroic mold. In the months that followed, America's industrial workers rose up against their corporate employers; those great bastions of the open shop—General Motors and United States Steel—caved in during early 1937, and industrial unionism swept the mass-production sector. In his on-the-spot history, Edward Levinson concluded triumphantly: "Labor was on the march as it had never been before in the history of the Republic."

Fifty years of history have passed since John L. Lewis launched the CIO, and so have nearly 50 years of historical writing about those events that Levinson first chronicled in *Labor on the March* (1937). Ongoing research has vastly increased our fund of information: in their definitive 1977 biography of John L. Lewis, Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine call Alinsky's version of that first breakfast meeting "overly dramatic" and, indeed, they dismiss Alinsky's widely read 1949 biography (*John L. Lewis: An Unauthorized Biography*) as largely fiction.

New directions in the discipline, especially the rise of social history, have prompted labor historians to explore well beyond the political/institutional boundaries that first defined the events of the 1930s. More important yet has been the impact of a new generation of historians whose ideological roots go back to the New Left. And, finally, historical judgments have been tempered by the unfolding history of the industrial-union movement, as it consolidated itself within the trade-union mainstream and then, in our own day, fell increasingly on hard times. If the CIO has not proved to be the transforming event that Edward Levinson anticipated, neither can later historians cast that history in the heroic terms of Edward Levinson's *Labor on the March*.

With all this by way of preface, let us proceed to some reckoning of where we stand today on what *Fortune* in 1937 called "one of the greatest mass movements in our history."

Current scholarship, in fact, hinges very largely on the treatment of the CIO as a "mass movement." This is a subject by no means ignored by such leading CIO scholars of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

older generation as Walter Galenson, Sidney Fine, and Irving Bernstein. No one, indeed, has written—or is likely to write—a more complete account of industrial struggle than Fine's *Sit-Down* (1969) on the great General Motors strike of 1936–37. And Bernstein's *Turbulent Years* (1970) contains the best narrative history we have of the labor battles of the 1930s.

But consider the scene with which Bernstein concludes his book. President Roosevelt is meeting with a group of worried publishers in April 1937 at the height of the sit-down wave. He reassures them that the new unions are going through "growing pains." Collective bargaining, a difficult process in the best of times, can be learned "only by experience." Ultimately, "we are going to get a workable system." In Bernstein's schema, perfectly captured in the book's ending, the central history of *Turbulent Years* is about the institutionalization of the CIO. This also is Sidney Fine's view. He quotes approvingly Jay Lovestone's remark after the GM sit-down strike that "rarely does a single event of and by itself mean so much"—but with this qualification: "insofar as it applies to the growth of unionism in the automobile and other mass-production industries."

A rival generation of younger historians would have struck out Fine's qualification. "Recent historians associated with the Left," Staughton Lynd wrote in 1972,

> . . . have declined to join in the liberal celebration of [the] results [of] industrial union organizing in the 1930s. . . . We have dwelt on happenings which for liberal historians are merely preliminary or transitory, such as the mass strikes in Toledo, Minneapolis, and San Francisco in 1934, the improvisation from below of local industrial unions and rank-and-file action committees. . . .[1]

In Lynd's formulation, the rank and file becomes the true subject of New Deal labor history, and the logic of that history resides not—as Fine or Bernstein would have it—in how militancy progressed to stable collective bargaining but rather in how that process killed the rank-and-file character of industrial-union organization.

History does not readily shift in its moorings. This was one of those moments. Lynd's conception of industrial-union history drew its inspiration from the syndicalist streak in New Left thinking. The mainspring of revolution, as George Rawick had seen it in 1969, was "working-class self-activity," by which, as Rawick said of the sit-down strikes of the 1930s, "the genuine advances of the working class were made by the struggle from below, by the natural organization of the working class, rather than by the bureaucratic elaboration of the administration of the working class from above."[2]

Rawick thought he was witnessing in 1969 the next phase in that struggle from below. He and others of the New Left glimpsed revolution in the factory unrest of the Vietnam era and, on a grander scale, in the Paris spring of 1968. That heady moment passed. But it implanted a syndicalist enthusiasm that, transmuted and refined, has to a considerable degree redefined the terms on which the historical study of industrial unionism has proceeded ever since.

II

That history turns on the theme of *containment*—of rank-and-file radical potential held in check and ultimately defeated. But who did the containing? A logical question, of course, and one that instantly established a fresh reference point for thinking about the institutional history of industrial unionism. No agency could claim exemption from this question and, given its syndicalist presuppositions, none passed muster—not the CIO, not the New Deal, not even the left.

Communist trade-union work, wrote Martin Glaberman, was best described as "'bureaucratic'—the tendency to substitute the power of officials and institutions for the direct power of the rank and file." For an anti-Stalinist like Glaberman, this tendency was fundamental in nature, stemming from a conception of "the motive power of historical development as being the Party rather than the class."[3]

Even writers basically sympathetic to the CP role, once they fell within the containment mode, defined party history in terms of "mistakes" in the relation to the rank-and-file struggle. On this basis, James R. Prickett constructed a reperiodization of party history no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

longer pegged to the swings in Comintern policy. For Prickett, the decisive moment came when the CP shifted from the United Front from Below—from the rank-and-file work of the early 1930s—to the Popular Front—to integration into the industrial-union structure, a period lasting until the expulsions of the Cold War era.[4]

As for the CIO, listen to how Staughton Lynd concludes his case study of the steelworkers' movements of the early 1930s:

> The rank and file dream passed into the hands of [John L.] Lewis in the bastardized form of an organizing committee [SWOC] none of whose national or regional officers were steelworkers, an organizing committee so centralized that it paid even local phone calls from a national office. . . .

The New Deal itself, however, has been designated the key agency of containment. Its potency here derived not so much from FDR's broad political appeal to the working class—a familiar complaint of the Old Left—as from the specific impact of the organizing and bargaining protections granted by the Wagner Act (1935) on the self-activity of industrial workers. Thus, in a characteristic statement, Rick Hurd writes:

> The tendency was to eschew direct action and to opt instead for NLRB elections, or where capital was obstinate to file unfair labor practice complaints with the NLRB. As a result the working class was taught to rely on the protection of the law rather than on their own strength. Although the New Deal contributed only marginally to the unionization of the working class, it did help shape the movement which evolved. It furthered the expansion of unions which worked within the economic system. . . .[5]

AN INSTITUTIONAL CONFIGURATION emerged altogether different from that of the liberal historiography: instead of agencies ranged for or against the unionization of industrial workers, all institutions found themselves grouped on one side as more or less hostile to the radical self-activity of the rank and file. With New Deal labor policy installed as the centerpiece in this alignment, a focus existed for thinking about intriguing questions of intention and design. Whose hand was behind a strategy so ingeniously constructed to forestall radical change?

The answer most confounding to liberal assumptions would have granted industry that role. This was an expectation already well certified in New Left thinking before the advent of the syndicalist phase. The group centering around *Studies on the Left* (1959–67), with William Appleman Williams as mentor, had advanced the thesis of corporate liberalism, which, first, identified America's corporate leaders as the key actors in the modern capitalist order, and, second, identified moderate reform as their principal method for stabilizing the system. "It is precisely this flexibility and sophistication on the part of American businessmen," wrote James Weinstein in 1965, "that has given the system its strength and durability."[6]

The corporate-liberal thesis was tested out mainly on progressivism, but it was presumed to apply equally well to the New Deal. Organized labor served as a kind of junior partner in the corporate-liberal enterprise, accepting—to use Ronald Radosh's phrase—a "corporate ideology" and working actively during the New Deal for "the integration of organized labor into the corporate order."[7]

Unfortunately, the facts have run too stubbornly against applying the corporate-liberal thesis to industrial-union history. Although they spoke a reformist idiom and encouraged other New Deal welfare measures, corporate liberals drew the line (as indeed had their precursors in Weinstein's account of corporate liberalism in the Progressive era) against entering any genuine bargaining relationship with trade unions. It was precisely at the point when Section 7a* pushed them on this issue, as Kim McQuaid has shown, that labor-business collaboration within the National Recovery Administration broke down.[8]

From that time in 1934 until the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Wagner Act in 1937, organized business presented virtually a

* A clause of the National Industrial Recovery Act (1933) granting workers organizing and bargaining rights, but so loosely drawn and weakly enforced as to enable open-shop employers effectively to resist the unionization of their workers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

united front against New Deal labor policy. The program, concluded one sympathetic writer after a careful assessment of the known facts, "had very little to do indeed with the manipulative ingenuity of a politically sophisticated *corporatist* element of the American business elite."[9]

If not corporate business, then the best candidate as the guiding hand of containment would seem to have been the New Deal itself. This view has been strongly underwritten by a theory of the state in capitalist societies advanced in the 1970s by such neo-Marxist writers as Nicos Poulantzis and Fred Block. They posited a capitalist state relatively autonomous of private capital, and capable even of overriding its wishes in defense of the social order. (So that, in the case at hand, the New Deal might impose the Wagner Act on an industrial business class too short-sighted to recognize its own long-term interests.) The theory presumed, however, a sureness of state purpose that poorly described how the New Deal labor policy came about.

The events leading to the Wagner Act were circuitous and contradictory, heavily affected by the unexpected struggles over Section 7a during the NRA period. What seems clear is that the Roosevelt administration never had a blueprint for such legislation and indeed

Mark Levinson and Brian Morton

The CIO, John Lewis, and the Left

An Interview with Philip Van Gelder

This past spring two young Dissent *writers, Mark Levinson and Brian Morton, went to Baltimore to interview Philip Van Gelder, one of the founders of the CIO and a former secretary-treasurer of the Industrial Union of Maritime and Shipbuilding Workers of America. Here is a partial transcript of what they asked and he answered.*

□

Q: *How did you become involved in the labor movement?*

A: It started when I read a book by Norman Thomas, called *America's Way Out*, in 1931 or '32—the depths of the Depression. I was very much impressed by the book, and I got in touch with the Socialist party in Philadelphia, where I was living. I fell in with Franz Daniel, who was the Socialist-party organizer there. I became an organizer too, for a short time. I think I was paid something like $15 a week.

Then, in 1933, Daniel was hired by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, to organize the shirt workers in eastern Pennsylvania. He gave me a call, and they put me on salary too. Most of these plants were sweatshops—they had run away from the union in New York. We would tell the young women working in these shirt factories that if they got fired for union activity we'd pay their wages. And they did fire one girl, and we said OK, what *are* your wages? And it turned out her wages were $2 a week. . . .

When the organizing drive ended I came back to Philadelphia, where I was waiting for another assignment when the Philadelphia taxi strike broke out. So the Amalgamated lent me to the Teamsters Union to help run the taxi strike. That was a very unusual strike. . . . A friend of mine was organizing the ball-bearing workers in the area, and as a show of solidarity they gave us ball bearings to throw at the windows of the taxicabs. Instead of ordinary stones we'd throw union-made ball bearings.

Q: *What was the atmosphere for organizing at that time? Was there much public support for unions?*

A: There was a lot of ferment. I don't think the public was particularly enthusiastic about unions, but they were very sympathetic to all the people who were being thrown out of work. People were in desperate circumstances: there was no established welfare system, and even if you were lucky enough to have a job, you were making miserable wages. So if you saw a chance to do something, you organized. The shipyard workers, for instance, organized themselves with practically no outside support.

Q: *So you didn't face much of the knee-jerk hostility to unions that organizers encounter today?*

A: Well, you did have a certain number of people who were antiunion. And, of course, a certain number were just scared of being fired. When we tried to organize the shipyard workers at Newport News, they fired four or five of our people, and when we took a committee in to protest it, they fired the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mostly resisted it until its imminent passage. The guiding hand clearly was Senator Robert Wagner's. It depends, of course, on how one defines the state. With a sufficiently broad conception—one accommodating substantial internal conflict and uncertainty and stressing the *enabling* aspects of reform regimes (that is, that the New Deal created the conditions making the Wagner Act possible)—the New Deal doubtless can be made to fit the neo-Marxian mold.[10]

Other routes, too, can be found to that end. The legal scholar Karl Klare, for example, saw the Wagner Act at its birth as "indeterminate," and "susceptible to an overtly anticapitalist interpretation." That the outcome was otherwise Klare put down to deep-rooted judicial reasoning processes that rested on "assumptions of liberal capitalism and foreclosed those potential paths of development most threatening to the established order."[11] So the capitalist state need not be entirely purposive: its very processes assured a properly conservative outcome.

The difficulties in the New Left assault on liberal institutional history should not blind us to the very real benefits likely to result from breaking out of a unilinear approach to the labor movement, the New Deal, and industry. One sees this, for example, in Steve Fraser's

committee. But on the whole, I think most people agreed that you had to have a union.

Q: *Now, you say that the shipyard workers just about organized themselves. Why did that happen when it did?*

A: When Roosevelt took office in 1933, there was a great wave of hope. He seemed to be opening the way to a better future. People saw the chance to organize, and if there was anybody there to help them, they did. The shipyard workers organized themselves with great ability, great ingenuity. They organized health committees, food-raising committees—

Q: *Before you got involved as an organizer?*

A: Well, we got in and helped, but we didn't know much more than anybody else. . . .

Q: *How did you get involved in that organizing campaign?*

A: In 1933, during the taxi strike, John Green, who was the president of the shipbuilders and also a member of the Socialist party, brought over three bus-loads of shipbuilders to support us. So when the shipbuilders went on strike the next year, we went over to help them out.

Q: *What was the AFL's reaction to the strike?*

A: The shipbuilders' union was independent of the AFL, and it was an industrial union: it would take in everybody in the shipyard, regardless of skill. So the AFL *officials*, the bureaucracy, wouldn't have anything to do with us. We impinged on the jurisdiction of about a dozen different craft unions—the carpenters, the electricians, the machinists, and so on. The AFL, of course, said the only way to organize the shipyard was to take each craft in its own particular union. But many of the *local* union leaders were very friendly and sympathetic. We got support and donations from 79 different unions, most of them AFL.

Q: *And you didn't find any resistance among the rank and file to industrial unionism?*

A: No, they were all in favor of being in the same union. We had the advantage over the AFL in that respect—nobody could see the sense of having eight different unions with one employer, and the constant arguments about whether the electrician was doing the pipe fitter's work, and the carpenter the sheet-metal man's work. . . .

Q: *So there was very fertile ground for the CIO, before it took organizational form?*

A: Oh yes. When we went up to organize the shirt workers, we put out a leaflet one day, and the next day the hall was filled.

Q: *Tell us a little about the formation of the CIO.*

A: At the AFL convention in 1935, John L. Lewis made a long speech about how you had to organize on an industrial-union basis. The steel industry, the auto industry, the rubber industry—none of them had been unionized. He was voted down; it was a very bitter, very dramatic convention.

After the convention, Lewis called a committee together and they decided to go ahead and organize industrially. This was the Committee for Industrial Organization. The AFL denounced the committee as a dual union movement, and ordered them to dissolve. But they refused, and as a result they were suspended, and ordered to appear for trial at the

(Continued on next page.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

current work on Sidney Hillman, who best fits the model of the labor leader well-connected to government and industry and actively pursuing a reconstructed labor-relations system.[12] The connections do not, however, run to the old corporate liberals but rather to early advocates in business and professional circles of the Keynesian state. Fraser has assimilated the New Left perspective, but the outcome is both more sophisticated and less pejorative than, say, Radosh's earlier work on Hillman. Nor should one underestimate the extent to which that perspective has taken hold among historians. Thus a seasoned practitioner such as David Montgomery speaks of a "New Deal formula" that was "simultaneously liberating and co-optive for the workers." Governmental intervention freed them from employer control, yes, but "also opened a new avenue through which the rank and file could in time be tamed and the newly powerful unions be subjected to tight legal and political control."[13]

III

As institutional analysis, the New Left approach redefined the terms, but not the terrain of industrial-union history. But if the rank-and-file upsurge was the core event in this history—

convention. Lewis then called a meeting—it was Sidney Hillman, David Dubinsky, Phil Murray, and several others. When he invited Green and me from the shipbuilders' union, it was a clear signal that he intended to break from the AFL.

Well, some of the people there were a little hesitant about breaking with the AFL. They thought they should challenge the AFL executive council's right to suspend them. But Lewis wasn't buying any of this. After most of them had spoken, he got up and he gave a little speech of the kind only he could make. He spoke about coming into the city of Pittsburgh by train for this meeting, and seeing all the steel mills down there, none of them organized. And he said that's the basic industry in the United States. We've got to organize the steel industry or we won't have any labor movement in this country. And, in so many words, what he said was, I don't know what the rest of you are going to do, but the United Mine Workers are going to go ahead and organize the workers of this country on an industrial basis! And all the opposition folded up [laughter], and he got a unanimous vote.

To my best knowledge I'm the only survivor of that meeting. So I challenge contradiction.

At this time—from about 1935 till the War—there was a great spirit of exuberance in the air. Everybody was getting wage increases. If the union won an election, the company would sit down and negotiate with you. Nowadays, if you win an election they appeal it, and you have to bring charges of refusal to bargain, and the whole thing ends up in court. But in those days, the government representatives would go to the company and say, Look, these people are organized, you've got to deal with them.

The more organizing drives succeeded, the more confidence people got, the less fear they had. John Lewis was a very heroic figure at that time. He had a magnificent sense of theater. He could dominate a crowd. I remember at the AFL convention in '35, when the votes were against him, Lewis wanted to introduce a resolution when the time for introducing resolutions had passed. In order to do that, you had to have unanimous consent. So Lewis looks around and says, "Do I get unanimous consent?" And not a soul in that whole damn audience had guts enough to stand up and say no.

Q: *This is probably one of those impossible questions, but if there had been no John L. Lewis —*

A: — There wouldn't have been any CIO, I'll promise you that! He was the only person who could lead it: he was strong enough, he had enough money in his treasury, and he went all-out for it. He wasn't interested in compromising, or having a legal battle with the AFL as to whether they could get a little bit of industrial unionism. You had to have a real sharp break, and he made it; he inspired people all over the country. . . .

Lewis was really a remarkable personality. He could be the most charming, attractive person you'd ever met. And he could be a vicious opponent. He couldn't work *with* anybody. You were for him, or you were against him.

Powers Hapgood, another socialist, saw both sides of that. When Hapgood was with the miners, he was organizing against Lewis, and Lewis had him beaten up. It was at a miners' convention. A couple of guys knocked at his door—Hapgood knew them, they knew him. They said, "John L. sent us—he says we have to beat you up. So we have to beat you up." And Hapgood said, "Well at least give me a chance. Let me take my coat off." So they let him take his coat off and *then* they beat him up. But then,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the event that gave it a logic of containment—then historical inquiry had to proceed on an entirely different plane as well. Lynd's call to arms demanded nothing less than a rank-and-file history of industrial unionism.

It happened (not entirely by chance) at roughly the same time that larger changes within the historical discipline strongly reinforced the hand of the radical historians. Social history began to preoccupy the profession. For labor historians, this meant a shift in attention from union institutions to the workers themselves. Some students, strongly influenced by Edward P. Thompson and Herbert Gutman, explored working-class culture. Others, following the lead of Harry Braverman and David Montgomery, concerned themselves with the shop-floor experience of American workers. And much other social-history scholarship led by a variety of avenues—ethnicity, race, family, urbanism, and so on—into the study of working-class life. Little of this activity dealt with the modern period; 19th-century materials lent themselves much more readily to what social historians were trying to do. But once radical historians placed the rank and file at the center of New Deal labor history, it followed that social history would be enlisted in

---

a couple of years later, when the CIO was getting off the ground, Lewis gave him a job.

Q: *He must have felt a little strange going to work for Lewis. Did Lewis apologize?*

A: Oh, no. He just said, "We need guys like you to organize." And he sent him right back into the district where he'd fought against Lewis.

Q: *Now, all through this period, you were still in the Socialist party. So I presume that you saw socialism and trade unionism as complementary?*

A: Oh yes.

Q: *But it seems to me that one of the great tragedies of 20th-century American radicalism is that several years later they came in conflict. Did you feel that at all?*

A: Yes. It seemed to me that the socialists were not being effective as a political party. When Roosevelt began to get the country moving, you might say, through social improvement programs like work relief, home relief, unemployment insurance, the right to organize—for the great majority of workers this was the real, live, practical movement. . . . And the socialists were just a sect of people who discussed utopia. Green and I were both socialists, but we felt more or less the same way. We couldn't get the people we organized into unions to join the Socialist party too—there was no real passageway from one to the other. They were getting wage increases; they were improving their conditions; they didn't feel any need for a political revolution. So I sort of drifted away. In 1936, when your union was 100 percent behind Roosevelt, it just didn't make any sense to say, "Well that's OK for you guys, but I'm for Norman Thomas." Norman Thomas felt that if you didn't vote for him for president, then you weren't a socialist. I think that was a big mistake. He kept aloof from the labor movement, and he expected its members to agree with our ideology before they were ready for it. . . .

Q: *How did you see the role of the Communists in the labor movement?*

A: Some of them were very able. Lee Pressman, for example, was a brilliant lawyer and a very able general counsel. Whether he was a member of the party or not I don't know, but he went right down the line with them. On the other hand, they followed their line come hell or high water, and if it meant wrecking the union they wrecked the union.

Q: *How would you summarize the role of radicals in the formation of the CIO?*

A: I don't think it could have been done without them. A great number of the rank-and-file leaders and lower-level officers were either Socialists, Communists, or sympathizers.

I know from my own experience that Socialists contributed a great deal to the labor movement. They were devoted; they weren't personally ambitious. They weren't in there to make money. . . .

Q: *Do you think that today's trade-union movement has lost some of that selflessness?*

A: I think it has; I'm sure it has. But we still have some very good, very dedicated labor leaders. And I would say that today, still, the best of them are infected with socialism, or some similar ideology. Once you've accepted the idea that the best guy is the one who makes the most money, once you've accepted the capitalist system, you've got the law of the jungle. . . . □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the effort to understand the mobilization of industrial workers during the 1930s.

Thus Peter Friedlander subtitled his book *The Emergence of a UAW Local, 1936–1939* (1975), *A Study in Class and Culture.* His point of departure was primarily the conception put forward in Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), and adopted by his American disciples, that working-class consciousness was the product of pre-industrial worker cultures transformed in the crucible of industrial capitalism. "The crux of the problem of labor history in the thirties," so it seemed to Friedlander, was "the historic emergence of specific structures of personality and culture out of the collapse and/or transformation of a complex and variegated collection of prebourgeois cultures. . . ."

Friedlander undertook, in effect, a labor ethnography—arranging the workers partly by

Harold Meyerson

"The Women Just Came out of Their Homes . . ."

An Interview with Genora Dollinger

The breakthrough for the CIO and industrial unionism came at Flint, Michigan, in the winter of 1936–37. On December 30, 1936, United Auto Workers militants sat in at General Motors' Fisher Body plants One and Two. Several weeks later, throwing the company off balance with a diversionary raid on Flint's Chevrolet plant Nine, the UAW occupied Chevy Four, effectively tying up most of GM's engine production. On February 11, the company capitulated and recognized the UAW as the bargaining agent for its workers. Within a few months, Chrysler had followed suit, and United States Steel had recognized the Steelworkers. American industrial and social relations were permanently altered.

A key figure in the Flint strike was the 23-year-old Genora Johnson—now Genora Dollinger—who during the course of the strike founded and led first the UAW's Women's Auxiliary and then the Women's Emergency Brigade. Genora Johnson, a native of Flint, was an active member of the Socialist party, as was Kermit Johnson, then her husband, who was the leader of the UAW's Chevrolet workers in Flint. During World War II, she was a UAW militant at Detroit's Briggs plant. In recent years she has been active in the peace movement, and she was featured in a documentary film on the Women's Emergency Brigade, With Babies and Banners. *I interviewed Genora Dollinger for* Dissent *in Los Angeles on May 11.* — H.M.

□

Q: *When John L. Lewis slugged [the carpenters union president] Bill Hutchinson at the 1935 AFL convention in Atlantic City, and then resigned from the AFL board and convened the CIO a couple of weeks later, what kind of reaction did that produce a thousand miles away, in Flint?*

A: You noticed it only in the little political groupings, but otherwise it didn't make a great big ripple until we really attempted to get in touch with the CIO. Of course, the Socialist party in New York and Detroit would send in people to tell us about it.

Q: *Before the founding days of the CIO, what had there been in the way of political or union organizing in Flint?*

A: In 1912 or 1913, Flint had elected a Debsian socialist mayor. [By the '30s] there were no remnants of that; I could never find any old socialists of that period.

When I was about 16, we formed the Flint branch of the Socialist party. We had political discussions and workers' education classes. Our headquarters were in the Pengally Building, which later became the organizing headquarters for the UAW in Flint. In this building were the offices of the Proletarian party, the Socialist Labor party, the Socialist party, and the Lovestoneites [a small left-wing group that had left the Communist party in the late 1920s]. So there was a lot of ferment in the city. The Communist party had contacts up in the northern part of Flint in the Russian and Polish communities, but we didn't know too much about them. They became active in the strike primarily because people were sent in from the outside.

For some time before the strike, Roy Reuther

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

occupational categories but mainly by ethnic and generational groupings—of an auto-parts plant located in the Polish Hamtranck district of Detroit. Friedlander's methodology also was drawn from the social-history scholarship that aimed at capturing concretely and in depth the experience of 19th-century workers. The unit of study remained local but was defined by a single factory rather than by a 19th-century industrial town, and the local evidence came not from census records, town directories, and newspapers but almost entirely from the intensive interviewing of surviving participants.

Friedlander wrote social history, but in service to Lynd's conception of the labor history of the 1930s as the self-mobilization of workers for collective action. His story was about how UAW Local 229 became organized. What has proved notable, even remarkable, about his pioneering little book on a minor auto-parts

was in Flint. He was a member of the Socialist party. He was teaching workers' education classes for the Mott Foundation (which was financed by General Motors' largest shareholder, Charles Stewart Mott), and Roy was instructing a lot of people in such things as labor history and parliamentary procedure. So he did more groundwork than the other Reuther brothers. The people that first built the nucleus of the strike were primarily people who had gone through Roy's classes.

Q: *In April 1936, the UAW had its real founding convention in South Bend. When did you feel the impact of that in Flint?*

A: That's when we started having meetings in homes—secret meetings, because General Motors was a very dangerous customer. You could get beaten up walking home or in a beer garden if you talked union in the shop. They had lip readers in the shop who could be one aisle away from you and see what you were saying; you'd wind up in the hospital the next day. So we had to have very clandestine meetings then, and that's when we started discussing and making plans.

Our slogan at the time was, When We Get the Signal, Move! We were part of the new CIO, and those initials were like G-O-D to us then.

Q: *What were relations like during the strike between the Socialist party, the Communist party, and the other left groups?*

A: Prior to the strike, we didn't know the CP members. They had their members primarily in Buick up in the North End. . . . There was a great deal of tension between the Socialists and the Communists—but locally we were all mainly interested in the Pinkertons and the goons they sent in to beat us up.

Now, when the UAW got its local newspaper going, [CP member] Henry Kraus came in. He sure edited things the way he wanted to. The Lovestoneites took a terrific, bloody beating when we took Plant Four, but there was very little of that in the *Flint Auto Worker.*

The Proletarian party laid a lot of the groundwork in Fisher Body—Clayton Carpenter and his brother Clarence—and you didn't read about them anywhere. They and the SLP said that labor unions were the labor lieutenants of capitalism. But they had educated their people about class struggle and so they took active roles.

It was important that there were political union leaders in Flint who were helping what was really a big general strike. For instance, all public transportation was down, and the leader of that effort was Fred Stevens, who was a member of the Socialist party. They could have settled at any time; they were being given all kinds of inducements, because General Motors needed them for their back-to-work movement. But they refused.

Q: *How far into the Flint strike did you go before you set up the Women's Emergency Brigade? When was it conceived, and why?*

A: The strike began on December 30th, and on New Year's Eve I happened to be on the Fisher Two picket line when we saw these women coming down. General Motors was appealing to them by radio, and we had no means of getting to them: most workers didn't have telephones then. These women came down to the plants to threaten their husbands: we're going to go without food, without heat, they said, so you come out by New Year's Eve or you'll have a divorce. It was a very potent thing; some of the men actually came out of the plant. That's when I decided to organize the women into an auxiliary. I went into several mass meetings of the men and I appealed to them to have their wives and sisters and aunts come to the next meeting. That was shortly after January 1.

At the start of the Battle of Running Bulls [a January 11 battle outside the plants between strik-

(Continued on next page.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

plant is that its findings very largely prefigured an entire decade of further research on the rank-and-file history of the 1930s.

From the time union activity began in December 1936, triggered by the wave of sit-down strikes in the area, three years passed before the auto-parts plant became fully organized. Only step by step, as the union demonstrated its growing power in a series of confrontations with management, did the body of workers sign on. There was nothing random about this slow process. On the contrary, Friedlander was able to map quite precisely how the social groupings he had identified—the second-generation Poles, the low-skilled first-generation immigrants, the Appalachians and, last of all, the Yankee toolmakers and inspectors—joined the union and the kinds of union men they became. The social-history analysis Friedlander had undertaken suggested that their sociocultural characteristics inhibited the class development of his auto workers.

Not all subsequent research of this kind fits Friedlander's findings. The ethnic identity of

ers and police], the men ushered the women and children to safety; I was the only woman down there that night. After a time, it was clear the battle was going badly. Victor Reuther, the primary speaker on the sound car that night, told me the batteries were running down. I asked Victor to let me speak, though I wasn't known as a sound-car speaker. He said, we've got nothing to lose.

I was incensed at what was happening; I'd just seen Fred Stevens of the Transportation Workers jump over a little ditch and the water turned red and blood spurted out of his leg. So I said to the crowd at the top of the hill: "People of the City of Flint: do you know the police are shooting unarmed men down here?" I asked the women, "Break through the police lines and come down here and stand with us, with your husbands and brothers." I didn't ask the men because I knew what would happen to them. The first woman started down, and the police grabbed her by the coat, but she pulled away and started coming down. And other women came. That was the thing that saved the battle.

So after the battle, we decided to organize the women into the Women's Emergency Brigade—an organization without any elections, just assigned squads. We organized the Brigade at mass meetings of the Auxiliary. I gave the bloodiest talk you ever heard in your life. I said you had to be willing to hold hands with your sister, and she might go down in blood, but you couldn't be the type of woman to faint away; you had to go on battling. I made it more and more bloody-sounding because I didn't want weak characters or women who had a lot of children—but I had a great deal of difficulty in restraining them. We had a 16-year-old granddaughter of a striker and a 72-year-old grandmother who came out of the copper country. We signed up between 400 and 500 women in the brigade alone.

Q: *Were any of these women employed in the plants?*

A: A small minority. Of my four lieutenants, three happened to be single, and they were plant workers. Two were from Fisher Body and one was from AC Spark Plug. But the women in AC, which was the only big plant employing women, were never pulled out on strike. They were too intimidated. The other plants didn't employ women, just a very small number at Fisher One. And the union wouldn't let women sit in, because the press would have used that against us.

Q: *Did the rest of the Brigade leadership come out of a political background like yours?*

A: No. Well, the best women in the Brigade for action were the Lovestoneite women who did come out of a similar experience, and a few of the Socialist-party women built the Auxiliary, set up the first-aid station, the children's nursery, and classes. But when it came to the Brigade, I had two Fisher Body workers, both of them out of the South originally. Practically all of them were from the South. It was like a new breath of freedom for them: they were being emancipated from their homes as well as their poverty.

Q: *The Brigade played a role in the action where the UAW pretended to take over one plant —*

A: — You bet we did! That was the plant that won the strike, Plant Four, which made all the motors for GM cars. Kermit Johnson, my husband, was the union leader there.

At first, the plan to seize the plant was rejected by Walter Reuther; he said it was too dangerous, the whole national strategy would be jeopardized. . . . After we were defeated [at getting the plan approved], I wrote a two-page letter to Norman Thomas. I didn't know where the heck else to go.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

French-Canadian workers, for example, was forged into a notably militant industrial unionism in the carpet industry of Woonsocket, Rhode Island.[14] In a particularly keen analysis, Bruce Nelson has linked the militancy of West Coast maritime unionism—for which the San Francisco general strike of 1934 was the exemplary event—to the subcultures of the seamen and longshoremen.[15] But, on balance, the ethnocultural influences seem to have run counter to rank-and-file militancy. The leading historian of Slavic-American workers during the Great Depression, John Bodnar, has stressed their "realism," the high value they placed on job security, the insulating effect of their familial and community ties.[16] They became loyal union men (as did the immigrant workers in Friedlander's study), but they were not on the barricades in the great industrial battles of the 1930s.

Still less active were the black workers, for whom the CIO cause seemed less a hopeful event than a threat to their precarious place in American industry. August Meier and Elliott

When they finally decided to take the plant, Walter and Roy and Kermit worked very closely together. They held a "secret" meeting where they let the stool pigeons know we were going to take Plant Nine.

So the police were waiting there. They teargassed and beat those men bloody; and the whole Brigade was there, flags, clubs, everything: we broke windows so the men could breathe. When it was over, the Brigade and the men went back toward the Pengally Building. We didn't want the police to become suspicious that there was anything else going on. My lieutenants and I just sauntered casually around the corner and down Chevrolet Avenue to Plant Four to see how things were going.

They were having a rough time, throwing out the scabs, fighting inside the plant; they were not yet in a well-barricaded position. So we stayed there, and I sent one lieutenant to call the union for help. The police had just been notified. A whole contingent of police came marching down Chevrolet Avenue and there were five of us against the main gate.

They went to push us aside; we said, "Over our dead bodies, you go in there." You must remember that every policeman had an uncle or brother or relative working in the plants somewhere, and they knew how tough GM was, so we got them to procrastinate by saying, "If your wife was out here and you were working in that plant, wouldn't you expect her to stay?" They talked just long enough with us, saying, "Alright, these are our orders. We've got instructions too and we've got to go in."

Then up at one end of the street came the flag and the red berets and the Brigade singing "Hold the Fort for We Are Coming," and around Chevrolet Avenue on the other end came the sound car and the union men. I set up a circular picket line to keep the police out, and it would have been real bloody warfare if they had done anything at that point. Then the workers inside the plant finished their barricading. It's a huge thing to barricade, that Plant Four. It was down for 14 days, and then General Motors signed a contract.

Q: *What happened to the Women's Emergency Brigade after Flint? For a while, of course, there was a slew of sit-ins —*

A: — The women were sent all over: a cigar makers' strike outside of Detroit; the cotton factory strikes; Chevrolet Axle and different plants in Saginaw, Michigan; J.C. Penny's. Then the International formed the Women's Auxiliaries in all the locals. They had an international department set up, and they issued a beautiful bulletin. Go back and look at the oldest ones, and you'll find they conducted classes on how to dress properly, on the latest fashions, on hair coiffure and cooking and sewing. And that's what the International turned the Women's Auxiliary into.

Q: *Did your lieutenants in the Brigade or any of the women who were on the line ever subsequently play a role in their locals, as officers or organizers?*

A: No, they really didn't. They had some very competent leadership from Fisher One, but they were never elected to anything. I think they were kind of tired, too, to tell the truth.

Q: *None of the people who had been in the Brigade as far as you know ever had any kind of institutional role?*

A: None. In fact, when they made *With Babies and Banners* and they led me up to that house, I never quite forgave them for it. I hadn't seen those women in 40 years, and I broke down and cried.

You see, the women just came out of their homes and then they evaporated right back into them and became grandmothers. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rudwick's *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW* (1979), in fact, puts an odd gloss on the New Left conception of industrial-union history. For in a racially divided labor force, fair play for the oppressed minority may translate itself into containment of the white rank-and-file majority. The agent of this process, Meier and Rudwick argue, was the UAW leadership. And, by its success, this union bureaucracy laid the groundwork for the transformation of a quiescent black labor force in 1935 into a militant union group a decade later.

IV

The search for the rank-and-file activists that Staughton Lynd had in mind narrows down to a small band of industrial workers. Friedlander identified the four key men who launched the union struggle at his plant: the most important (and Friedlander's main informant) was Edmund Kord, an anticlerical Polish-American Socialist and night student at Wayne University; his ally in the torch-welding department had been a union miner; of the two leaders in front-welding, one was self-educated and probably of radical background, the other a devout Catholic active in church affairs. Around these four, a handful of activists coalesced to undertake the uphill mobilization of the other workers. What impressed Friedlander was "the narrowness of the base of active involvement and . . . the breadth of the more passive mass. . . ."

Other research has turned up variations on Friedlander's theme. The French-Canadian carpet weavers of Woonsocket were led by highly skilled Franco-Belgian anarcho-syndicalists. Among the mostly Irish transit workers of New York City, the key leaders were veterans of the IRA who, as Joshua Freeman remarked, differed from their fellow Irishmen in "matters of personality, politics, and ideology."[17]

To this mix, Ronald Schatz's systematic study of the electrical workers has added an occupational factor. To an unexpected degree, the industrial-union movement seems to have been sparked by craft workers. At General Electric and Westinghouse, the union pioneers were Anglo-Saxon long-service employees activated in many instances by demotions from high-status jobs during the Depression.

> We were skilled men on unskilled work! . . . We were just part of the common mass, you might say. And that's what got us really thinking a lot about unionism.

The speaker was vice-president of the UE Erie local, where most of the members were low-skilled immigrant workers. The women leaders were more closely representative of female electrical workers in job terms—short-service, young, semiskilled—but they differed crucially in their personal lives: they lived independent lives while their sister workers mostly were dutiful daughters living at home and turning over their pay to their parents.[18] So, consistently, these rank-and-file leaders were unrepresentative workers, and unrepresentative, as Friedlander said, in ways that gave them "more profound ideals of a broadly democratic nature. . . . They shared a 'resentment of injustice'. . . ."

Members of this group made up what there was of a radical American working class. Edmund Kord was a Socialist, and he recruited his entire secondary leadership into the Socialist party. To what purpose? Friedlander stresses the instrumental benefits. The Kord people gained confidence, a sense of direction and purpose, and practical training in the arts of organizing and running a local union. Much the same logic, one presumes, applied to the Socialist leadership of the aluminum workers in Kensington, Pa., and to the Lynn, Mass., electrical workers; to the Musteites in the Toledo Auto-Lite strike; to Trotskyists among the Minneapolis teamsters; to the IWW at the South Philadelphia Westinghouse works.

Did that instrumental logic apply as well to the Communists? Schatz's study of UE pioneers suggests that it did. They did not go from communism to unionism. "Most radical workers traveled in the opposite direction: they were union activists who joined the party for support in organizing." Their indigenous character emerges increasingly in recent scholarship as the key to understanding the CP unionists. It helps, for one thing, to account for the durable support they enjoyed among a non-Communist rank and file. And it throws into a rather

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

different light their relationship to the CP apparatus. They cannot be seen any longer simply as foot soldiers, so to speak, in the march and countermarch from the Third Period to Popular Front to Cold War. The point need not be pushed too far and, in any case, is likely to resist precise resolution. That ways could be found for evading or reconciling conflicting claims can certainly be demonstrated, as has been done, for example, by Ronald Filippelli's ingenious explanation of the success of the UE's CP leadership: it struck an implicit bargain with the membership, whereby the party line could be followed on the editorial page and in convention, but at the bargaining table primacy went strictly to bread-and-butter issues.[19]

The New Left/social-history orientation thus has had the effect of disengaging CP labor history from the formal party history (just as, on the flip side, it has had the effect of treating the Communist party as an agent of rank-and-file containment). The need for relative independence was of a piece with the need for the party connection in the first place. Radical the rank-and-file leadership may have been—but radical in service to the cause of industrial unionism.

V

What of the shop-floor actions that swept the industrial plants in the first stages of unionization? Here, too, Friedlander's findings have proved prescient. The wildcats and slow-downs in his parts plant sprang not from any class perspective or even from a strongly felt sense of grievance. They were the work of young "new hires" who had little interest in the union and whose activities Friedlander considered "nihilistic." There is a similar, if more variegated, drift to much of the subsequent research into shop-floor militancy.

The sit-downs at Akron's rubber plants, Daniel Nelson found, included after the first wave many that were called for frivolous or nonexistent reasons. "'We didn't care' is a common recollection of the sit-down veterans." Factionalism also contributed. Firestone, lacking the shop-floor turbulence of the Goodyear plant, exhibited a higher degree of solidarity, as measured, for example, by the vote given to labor candidates in the 1937 municipal elections. "Militancy and union power were inversely correlated," Daniel Nelson concluded.[20]

In his study of auto plants during this period, Nelson Lichtenstein found "an inherently parochial and localistic focus" to shop-floor actions.[21] They were mostly limited to strategically placed work groups (not on assembly-line work); they were called over grievances specific to those groups; and they occurred with little regard for the interests of other workers. That shop-floor actions might take a reactionary turn became evident in the wartime wildcats in Detroit auto plants, culminating in the week-long "hate" strike at Packard in 1943, called against the hiring or upgrading of black workers.

As a measure of emergent working-class consciousness, shop-floor militancy becomes increasingly cloudy and problematic. Might it not, however, have signified a more limited kind of struggle—one directed against the collective-bargaining system that was then taking shape under industrial unionism? This notion certainly runs as an undercurrent through the syndicalist visions of New Left scholars. Thus Karl Klare's analysis of the "deradicalization" of the Wagner Act turned on just those cases that gave primacy to the contract and "responsible" collective bargaining, culminating in the *Fansteel* decision (1939), which denied NLRB protection to sit-down strikers:

> *Fansteel* . . . bolstered the forces of union bureaucracy in their efforts to quell the spontaneity of the rank and file. As such, . . . it marked the outer limits of disruption of the established industrial order that the law would tolerate. The utopian aspirations for a radical restructuring of the workplace . . . were symbolically thwarted by *Fansteel*, which erected labor law reform as a roadblock in their path.

How strong a case can be made for the proposition that the shop-floor struggles of the 1930s aimed at "a radical restructuring of the workplace" or, more precisely, at a bargaining system that might result in such a restructuring? There was, first of all, a historical context for such a struggle. Nowhere else, recent scholarship suggests, was the conflict between labor traditions of autonomous work and the Taylor-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ist demand by management for control so sharply joined and so endemic as under American industrialism. The workplace was, in Richard Edwards's nice phrase, "contested terrain."

That mass-production workers seized every chance for shop-floor control seems clear from Nelson Lichtenstein's study of the auto industry during the sit-down era and during World War II and from postwar industrial-relations research into shop-level resistance to the formal contractual system. What has not been demonstrated is the existence of any rank-and-file conception of an alternative—say, of the shop-steward system that existed in England, or the even less structured shop-floor relations in Australia.

In their recent *Second Industrial Divide* (1984), Michael Piore and Charles Sabel make a strong case for technologically determined labor relations. The American mass-production system, based on special-purpose machinery and line assembly, called for narrowly defined job structures (in which the job, not the worker, carried the wage rate), orderly job allocation, and hierarchical control. It does not appear that industrial workers challenged these basic, determining elements. One of their earliest demands was for seniority, that is, for a *more* formalized system of job allocation. Grievance procedures were installed in the first GM and U.S. Steel agreements. And narrow job structures very quickly became the framework for wage determination under collective bargaining. The very logic of their work environment would seem (if one follows Piore and Sabel) to have compelled industrial workers to opt for a rule-bound system that militated against shop-floor self-activity.

THE FARTHER WE PROBE, the more intractable becomes the social history of the CIO. Consider two very recent studies at the far ends of the working-class spectrum. One deals with the success of Endicott-Johnson's welfare policy in forestalling unionization at its extensive upstate New York shoe plants. George Zahavi's point is not, however, that employer paternalism purchased labor quiescence but, on the contrary, that it inadvertently gave to workers considerable leverage in bargaining informally with management. That is, rank-and-file activism could occur in settings outside, and resistant to, union development.[22]

The second study deals with a climactic moment in CIO power at Akron in 1937. Newly triumphant in the rubber plants, the CIO seemed invincible. A labor ticket was fielded for the 1937 city elections, and was roundly defeated. "Akron unionists, who more than most industrial workers might have been expected to conform to [a monolithic CIO] image, nevertheless defied it," concluded Daniel Nelson in a detailed study of the Akron election. CIO leaders "assumed a unity of purpose and outlook that did not exist and overlooked forces that restricted the workers' willingness to act in concert."[23]

Worker resistance to paternalistic control at Endicott-Johnson does not lead to (in fact, evades the need for) unionism; labor militancy in Akron does not translate into class-conscious politics. And, to draw things to a conclusion, neither can the complex reality that is emerging be reduced to the New Left conception of a rank and file potentially revolutionary but somehow contained by external forces.[24]

VI

"It could have been otherwise." Staughton Lynd's words are a kind of touchstone to the new scholarship on industrial unionism. From that thought flowed a host of new questions about the known history of the CIO and about the unknown history of America's industrial workers. But that research must in the end be able to show that indeed "it could have been otherwise." Rich though the scholarly findings have been, they have not brought forth the one essential for historical reformulation: they have not revealed the alternative that rivaled the union course that was actually taken. So the field must ultimately be yielded to the liberal conception of industrial-union history.

Liberal historiography, however, is no longer what it was when it came under New Left assault 15 or so years ago. Bernstein's and Fine's central assumption had been the durability of the industrial-union achievement. (This was equally true of the New Left: the dividing line at bottom was whether one valued or deplored the stable collective-bargaining

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

system.) That assumption has fallen increasingly into question in recent years.

Today industrial unionism is in crisis. Its bargaining structure, constructed painstakingly over many years, has begun to unravel. (The latest—May 6, 1985—the major steel firms announce they are ending industry-wide bargaining.) The political strategy pioneered by the industrial unions is also in shambles. (The latest—May 4, 1985—Lane Kirkland denounces the Democratic party for seeking, in the aftermath of the 1984 elections, to distance itself from the labor movement.) Nor have the industrial unions held their own within the labor movement. As a group, they have shrunk by at least a quarter since 1955, and today they constitute scarcely 15 percent of the AFL–CIO. For a labor movement under siege, the industrial unions constitute a weakening battalion in the order of battle.

A perceptible change has overtaken the liberal interpretation of industrial unionism. Early on, in fact, as the AFL showed itself to be the more dynamic unionizing force over the longer term, historians began to downgrade the craft versus the industrial issue over which the CIO had been launched.[25] The heroes of industrial unionism also have lost much of their earlier luster. In Dubofsky and Van Tine's biography, John L. Lewis emerges as a deeply flawed figure, briefly remarkable as the founder of the CIO but incapable of providing it with sustained leadership, and incapable even of keeping political faith with his followers (he plotted for Herbert Hoover's nomination in 1940 before settling for Wendell Willkie). A sad undercurrent runs through the later chapters of John Barnard's fine brief biography of Walter Reuther. For all his social vision and boundless energy, the UAW leader was inexorably defeated by the environment in which he operated.

More telling yet has been the recent treatment of New Deal labor policy. In liberal historiography, the Wagner Act occupied a place of honor: it liberated workers from employer control and paved the way for collective bargaining. Now 50 years of legal evolution have made the National Labor Relations Act seem a straitjacket for the labor movement and increasingly also a tool of modern antiunion employers. (Lane Kirkland speaks of repealing the law; some unions are boycotting the NLRB.) One would expect that shadow to be cast back on the formative history of the Wagner Act. So we find James A. Gross's detailed account of the early NLRB devoted to describing the political counterattack that transformed a vigorous, independent NLRB "into a conservative, insecure, politically sensitive agency preoccupied with its own survival and reduced to deciding essentially marginal legal issues using legal tools of analysis exclusively."[26] By 1940, Gross's analysis suggests, we were already on course to the Reagan NLRB.

Christopher Tomlins's new history goes Gross one better. The heart of the matter for Tomlins is not the emasculation of the Wagner Act but the fact that it was in inherent opposition to the voluntaristic basis of the labor movement. Tomlins's hero is not Robert Wagner or John L. Lewis but Samuel Gompers, for Gompers at least understood—in Tomlins's words—that "a counterfeit liberty is the most that American workers and their organizations [could] gain through the state. Its reality they must create for themselves."[27] Perhaps it is time to coin a new historiographical designation, say, along the lines of postliberal revisionism.

AND WHAT OF THE FUTURE? Readers will doubtless have been struck by how strongly the unfolding history of industrial unionism has shaped our thinking about the opening struggles for that movement. At some point, past and present begin to disengage. The historian's own world becomes too remote from past events to dictate, in any direct sense, his or her conception of those events. The past can then be understood on its own terms, a lost world to be recaptured in the historian's imagination. That would apply, for example, to the 19th-century Knights of Labor, which was the expression of a long-gone small-producer economy. But the manufacturing economy on which industrial unionism was built seems today also on its way to extinction. (The latest—June 8, 1985—the U.S. Commissioner of Labor Statistics reports that 2 million manufacturing jobs have disappeared since 1980, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that nearly all the 7 million jobs created since the 1981 recession have been in services and construction.) Are we coming to the time when the CIO—at least in its original incarnation—will become the kind of historical subject that the Knights of Labor is today?

Notes

[1] Staughton Lynd, "The Possibility of Radicalism in the Early 1930s: The Case of Steel," reprinted in James Green, ed., *Workers' Struggles Past and Present: A "Radical America" Reader* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), p. 190.

[2] George Rawick, "Working-Class Self Activity," in the same book, p. 147. George Green's introduction to this useful collection of *Radical America* essays sketches in the ideological background and further evolution of Rawick's worker self-activity thesis.

[3] Martin Glaberman, "Vanguard to Rearguard," *Political Power and Social Theory: A Research Annual* 4 (1984), pp. 44, 59.

[4] James R. Prickett, "New Perspectives on American Communism and the Labor Movement," in the same journal and issue, pp. 3–36.

[5] Rick Hurd, "New Deal Labor Policy and the Containment of Radical Union Activity," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 8 (Fall 1976), p. 40.

[6] James Weinstein, "Gompers and the New Liberalism," reprinted in James Weinstein and David W. Eakins, eds., *For a New America: Essays . . . from "Studies on the Left"* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 111.

[7] Ronald Radosh, "The Corporate Ideology of American Labor from Gompers to Hillman," reprinted in the same book, p. 138.

[8] Kim McQuaid, "The Frustration of Corporate Revival during the Early New Deal," *Historian* 41 (August 1979), pp. 682–704.

[9] Stanley Vittoz, "The Economic Foundations of Industrial Politics in the United States and the Emerging Structural Theory of the State in Capitalist Society: The Case of New Deal Labor Policy," *Amerikastudien* 27 (no. 4, 1982), p. 365. Vittoz's emphasis.

[10] For a brilliant attempt at this, see Theda Skocpol, "Political Response to Capitalist Crisis: Neo-Marxist Theories of the State and the Case of the New Deal," *Politics and Society* 10 (1980), pp. 155–201.

[11] Karl E. Klare, "Judicial Deradicalization of the Wagner Act and the Origins of Modern Legal Consciousness, 1937–1941," *Minnesota Law Review* 62 (March 1978), pp. 291–92.

[12] Steve Fraser, "From the 'New Unionism' to the New Deal," *Labor History* 25 (Summer 1984), pp. 405–30.

[13] David Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 165.

[14] Gary Gerstle, "The Mobilization of the Working Class Community: The Independent Textile Union in Woonsocket, 1931–1946," *Radical History Review* 17 (Spring 1978), pp. 161–67.

[15] Bruce Nelson, "'Pentecost' on the Pacific: Maritime Workers and Working-Class Consciousness in the 1930s," *Political Power and Social Theory: A Research Annual* 4 (1984), pp. 141–82.

[16] John Bodnar, *Immigration and Industrialization: Ethnicity in an American Mill Town, 1870–1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977); Bodnar, "Immigration, Kinship, and the Rise of Working-Class Realism in Industrial America," *Journal of Social History* 14 (Fall 1980), pp. 45–59.

[17] Joshua B. Freeman, "Catholics, Communists, and Republicans: Irish Workers and the Organization of the Transport Workers Union," in Michael H. Frisch and Daniel J. Walkowitz, eds., *Working-Class America: Essays . . .* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 263.

[18] Ronald Schatz, "Union Pioneers: The Founders of Local Unions at General Electric and Westinghouse, 1933–1937," *Journal of American History* 66 (December 1979), pp. 586–602.

[19] Ronald Filippelli, "UE: An Uncertain Legacy," *Political Power and Social Theory: A Research Annual* 4 (1984), pp. 217–52.

[20] Daniel Nelson, "Origins of the Sit-Down Era: Worker Militancy and Innovation in the Rubber Industry, 1934–1938," *Labor History* 23 (Spring 1982), pp. 198–225; Nelson, "The CIO at Bay: Labor Militancy and Politics in Akron, 1936–1938," *Journal of American History* 71 (December 1984), p. 583.

[21] Nelson Lichtenstein, "Auto Worker Militancy and the Structure of Factory Life, 1937–1955," *Journal of American History* 67 (September 1980), p. 353.

[22] George Zahavi, "Negotiated Loyalty: Welfare Capitalism and the Shoeworkers of Endicott-Johnson, 1920–1940," *Journal of American History* 70 (December 1983), pp. 602–20.

[23] Nelson, "The CIO at Bay," pp. 565–86.

[24] There also were scholars who were quick to voice their doubts about the rank-and-file formulation. See especially Robert Zieger, "The Limits of Militancy: Organizing Paper Workers, 1933–1935," *Journal of American History* 63 (December 1976), pp. 638–57; and Melvyn Dubofsky, "Not so 'Turbulent Years': Another Look at the American 1930s," *Amerikastudien* 24 (1979), pp. 5–20.

[25] The best summary of this reassessment is in Christopher L. Tomlins, "AFL Unions in the 1930's: Their Performance in Historical Perspective," *Journal of American History* 65 (March 1979), pp. 1021–42.

[26] James A. Gross, *The Reshaping of the National Labor Relations Board . . . 1937–1947* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), p. 267.

[27] Christopher L. Tomlins, *The State and the Unions . . . 1880–1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), final page. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Carmen Sirianni

Equality and the Division of Labor

Toward the Self-Management of Time

Equality and justice are central to the idea of democratic socialism, yet their relationship to the organization of work and the division of labor has always been problematic. For Marx, transforming the process of production was a requirement for a classless society. In his early writings, he spoke of abolishing specialization, so that each individual can pursue various kinds of work and avocations. Although he later abandoned the imagery of "hunting in the morning, fishing in the afternoon, and rearing cattle in the evening," he never relinquished the idea that the fullest development of human talents requires diverse and flexible opportunities for work and learning, and that modern industry makes "variations of labor and fluency of functions" possible, if not inevitable—thereby eliminating the schism between mental and manual labor, and democratizing the process of production.

These guiding principles, while often reiterated, have seldom been probed systematically. Social democrats, until recently, have ignored the issue of applying the principle of equality to the process of labor. Advocates of industrial democracy also have generally failed to link this matter to their concern with the structural class divisions of labor and have tended to confine themselves to the more immediate tasks of reorganizing the workplace. The Yugoslav system of workers' self-management, while a noteworthy step toward democratization, has aimed to extend and perfect, not transform, the old divisions of labor.

Recent developments, however, have made it more urgent to formulate a theory of *equal opportunity in production.* Over the past few decades, both blue- and white-collar workers, and even many professionals, have become dissatisfied with the structure of available work, and demands for different and expanded kinds of career and educational opportunities have escalated. There is now a highly visible gap between the system's capacity to educate people for intellectually demanding jobs—and its (lagging) ability to offer workers opportunities to use and develop their skills. The very meaning of the concept of equal opportunity can no longer be taken for granted in advanced industrial democracies; for the role of structural divisions of labor has clearly reproduced inequalities in education and reinforced class subcultures.

The massive entry of women into the labor force and the challenges of feminism have further shaken our conceptions of how equity is to be effected in career and opportunity structures. Further, new technological developments threaten to displace masses of workers from their jobs and to alter fundamentally the very contours of labor markets and divisions of labor.

We now find ourselves challenged to articulate a theory of justice and equality of opportunity that can practically, and radically, apply to the social divisions of labor. This will require:

(1) an outline of new structural features of work careers and labor markets that make it possible to break down the old rigid class divisions;

(2) a formulation of principles of equity that can be applied to the processes that generate—and now constrain—workers' opportunities.

First, however, we must recognize that even the best structural reforms cannot by them-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

selves ensure equality, and that no principle of equity will remain unproblematic or uncontested. And any theory defining equality of opportunities, in its full complexity, must begin by recognizing that Marx's utopian premises of a society beyond scarcity and conflict will have to be abandoned. Opportunities that are circumscribed by scarce time and resources will always be relatively scarce. Liberal conceptions defining equality of opportunity will also remain inadequate as long as they fail to stress that the rules regulating the divisions of labor and labor markets are socially established and therefore open to modification.

To grasp the structural reforms that might provide equal opportunities for creative work, continuous learning, and career development, we must recognize the limits of one ideal, and model, that claims to overcome the class divisions of labor; I have called it *the Productive Integrity Model.* It is shared by Harry Braverman, Rudolf Bahro, Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel, and by other proponents of democratic collectives and workers' councils.[1] Simply stated, this model holds that the production process must be reorganized in ways that will give all workers in every workplace the full range of knowledge and skills, enabling them to function in and control "the entire production process." Thus mental and manual tasks should be shared by the entire work force in every work unit.

This ideal of a total sharing of tasks is valuable for many workplaces and, under more favorable conditions, we might expect it to be more viable than it has been so far in democratic collectives. This does not, however, provide an adequate conception of ways in which divisions of labor might be restructured in order to achieve equality of work opportunities and flexibility of work options.

First of all, relatively equal opportunities across the social divisions of labor cannot be achieved by a total sharing of tasks within particular units, since the amounts and kinds of routine and of creative work will vary substantially among different units. Even a complete sharing of tasks within, for example, retail stores, restaurants, warehouses, hotels, and garbage-collection services would hardly provide the range of opportunities for creative work, progressive learning, and career development that is available in such workplaces as universities, medical complexes, research laboratories, or architectural firms. Some production units will always provide opportunities that are far more conducive to learning, creativity, and career development than others.

Second, the Productive Integrity Model does not permit adequate flexibility in the arrangement of work. Given the constraints of space and the plurality and variation of workers' needs in the face of scarce time and resources, individuals and organizations would undoubtedly desire a good deal of flexibility. This would include flexible work-time options and a variety of other arrangements that would make a total sharing of tasks impossible. Therefore it would be necessary to provide greater flexibility than can be achieved by the Productive Integrity Model, in order to respond to changing family, friendship, and workmate relations, and to people's shifting occupational and avocational interests. It would also be necessary to take advantage of new technological opportunities, for instance, those provided in the telecommunications field, for which the Productive Integrity Model provides a particularly restrictive framework.[2]

Similarly, there are many conceivable technological and organizational constraints that might limit the applicability of sharing. Some positions require greater professionalization than others, especially when cost-rational criteria are applied.[3] And, to speak of motivation, aspiration, and preference, not every shipping clerk, for instance, aspires to share in high-level production and administration tasks. Some workers undoubtedly would put a higher priority on having the time and security to devote themselves, for instance, to the saxophone, and so would prefer a workplace that provides the space for rehearsal and performance. Similarly, some production-line workers might rather spend a few days a week working at a child-care center than learn engineering skills.

Where, then, shall we find egalitarian solutions, if not in the most direct sharing of tasks? Before attempting some answers, we must recognize two fundamental points. First, a free

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

society that institutionalizes a broad range of work options requires a free labor market—subject, of course, to some democratic regulation. Second, a relatively open labor market, with complex social divisions of labor, inevitably reflects some degree of what economists call "segmentation." The divisions this open labor market entails will not necessarily be reflected, as they are today, in terms of income, benefits, and security, but perhaps in terms of how opportunities are associated with various positions.

The labor market cannot be abolished; nor can all jobs be so redesigned as to eliminate the possibility of cumulative advantages or disadvantages in opportunity. There are, so far, no unambiguous criteria for determining, and eliminating, all forms of division that would be unacceptable in an egalitarian culture—although a society with wide educational opportunities would undoubtedly find strong segmentation undesirable and difficult to legitimize. Instructive, in this context, is the recent experience of relatively educated people who have left democratic work collectives because of the very limited opportunities they provide. Distinct opportunities associated with particular positions will inevitably exist within a complex social division of labor; but this need not result in the systematic segregation of workers who move in and out of these positions.

In addition to a complete sharing of tasks and active self-management wherever appropriate, two broad strategies hold particular promise for achieving relative equality within the division of labor. The first is the general restructuring of career lines and labor markets so as to permit diverse and flexible job combinations and career paths over the course of a life, including part-time work that affords the possibility of career growth and mobility. Mobility itself, it should be added, can be redefined to emphasize horizontal, rather than primarily vertical, movement. The second strategy is the development of government policies facilitating free labor-market choices. There should be guarantees and specific rights for flexible job and training options to suit individual needs at different stages of the life cycle that can compensate for some of the disadvantages incurred by previous labor-market and educational choices. Let me elaborate a bit.

The number of part-time work options affording career growth and progressive learning should be expanded—in the context of "flexible life scheduling," as Fred Best has called it.[4] This can take the form of job sharing, voluntarily reduced work time, banking and borrowing of earned time off, as well as sabbaticals. Such work arrangements and options have proved feasible in many occupations, including professions requiring long-term commitment, intense public contact, and supervisory functions. Individuals have gained greater control over time and balance in their lives. They have used flexible work options to continue learning on and off the job and to obtain access to scarce and better positions. Thus job opportunities have been democratized.

Others have been freed to pursue artistic and athletic avocations. Parents have become able to devote more time to family and children, in more equitable ways, both within the home and with regard to job opportunities. Older workers have been able to retire gradually, without losing professional ties and productive functions all at once. Organizations and enterprises, on the other hand, have experienced added procedural complexity and sometimes additional cost, as well as problems with accountability and supervision. But none of these problems have proved intractable. Organizational benefits have included higher output, workers' added enthusiasm, greater diversity of skills, and increased ability to respond to special projects and peak demands. Flexible options have also helped stimulate worker participation and "multiskilling," and are particularly appropriate for the more flexible technologies upon which competitiveness increasingly relies.[5]

Part-time schedules and other flexible options are especially important when redesigning routine jobs that cannot be entirely restructured or included in internal labor markets (see Note 7) with adequate learning and career opportunities. Such options can facilitate transitions to other, more challenging jobs, or enable people to maintain varied work roles with adequate growth possibilities. Thus we can

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

guard against the formation of a permanent class doing society's routine, hard, or dirty work. Waiting on tables part-time, for instance, may not be very oppressive if income and benefits are adequate, and if this, for instance, allows a person interested in dramatic work to pursue an acting career, or periodically to teach drama in a local elementary school. Part-time options with genuine career opportunities are also important if we are to break the domination of the "masculine model of work,"[6] and if we are to limit the capacity of organizations to consume people's time and rigidly structure their lives.

Without a broad range of alternative work time and career commitments, a genuine egalitarian transformation of the division of labor would be impossible. Opportunities would tend to be restricted to those in the better jobs, who are willing and able to work full-time (and often much more) to protect their privileged positions, thus limiting the opportunities of those in positions of limited mobility and skill. If some doctors cannot pursue flexible work options and life scheduling with some predictability and security, they will have a greater interest in restricting professional opportunities in medicine for others, even if it means working 60 hours a week. In short, an egalitarian transformation of the division of labor—including the sexual division of labor upon which I have not focused—requires a diversification of the cultural meanings of careers and the institutional mechanisms to sustain them.

Diversification and flexibility would in turn require greater openness (both vertically and horizontally) in the structure of work opportunities and labor markets. Thus alternative forms of security would replace those now achieved through what Weber called "social closure"—such as professional and craft exclusion. This would facilitate moving away from strictly internal labor markets, with entry only at the bottom of the ladder and, also, from secondary labor markets that are highly vulnerable, insecure, and provide few opportunities for career progression.[7]

Between these two poles there are various ways of structuring mobility and regulating competition so that workers can have access to opportunity and flexible work arrangements without excluding other groups or narrowly defining the routes of access. Career lines can be restructured to increase the differentiation in both the number and timing of job transitions, thus increasing the number and typical age spread of entry and exit portals. Not all teachers, for instance, need to work full-time or be certified through college degrees. Teachers of art and carpentry might be part-time artists and carpenters, certified directly by the schools that hire them, and move in and out of part-time teaching jobs at various points in their work lives. Not all engineers need engineering degrees, if shop-floor experience and in-house training programs enable them to perform engineering tasks adequately.

Increasing the openness of labor markets and the differentiation of career lines poses, of course, many problems and leads to many conflicts.[8] These would require continual negotiation of the organizational rules governing mobility and achievement, since what appears as an equitable rule to some may appear to others as an unfair restriction of opportunity. The values of equity and individuality will remain in permanent tension. There would be many issues of contention, and they would have to be settled democratically, both within and outside the work place. What, for instance, are the rules regulating access to opportunity for part-time vs. full-time workers? What are the rights of returnees from sabbaticals and leaves vs. those hired to replace them? And what are the rights of latecomers to a profession vs. those of long-time, more single-minded workers? What are the rights of those who enter a profession or organization in more unusual ways? In general, insiders tend to protect their opportunities through restrictive rules—and outsiders struggle to gain access. Such tensions are unlikely to disappear; but they can be mitigated, as ways are found to facilitate security and predictability for diverse work choices and situations.

There is nothing "natural" about particular forms of division of labor, career lines, and labor markets. All are products of social conflict and regulation. As Durkheim argued, the division of labor is the product of social regula-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion—and so are liberty and justice. Central to the approach I am proposing is a democratic regulation that will permit a flexible variety of work time and career options and the democratic determination of the parameters of relative advantage and disadvantage that accompany career paths. This is a more difficult problem for us than it was for Marx, who aimed ultimately to reduce work time as much as possible.

Essential to this process of democratic regulation, as I said earlier, are state policies and regulations that will facilitate diverse labor-market choices.These must be designed to enhance flexibility and security and to provide compensatory opportunities for people who have previously suffered educational and workplace disadvantages. For instance, labor-market boards, like those in Sweden, could be established on local and national levels to furnish easily accessible information (including alternative work options), retraining, and placement, thus enhancing variety and predictability of choice. A national sabbatical program could be established—extending the principle of social security, with individual accounts financed through payroll taxes—giving workers various options for time off or withdrawal of funds.[9]

Income-tax policies could be redesigned to make voluntary time/income tradeoffs more advantageous to the individual. A national incomes policy could establish proportionally higher wages for those in routine or low-opportunity jobs, which could be taken as monetary compensation or traded for time off, thus encouraging that such jobs be structured on a part-time basis. Local governments might designate a certain quota of part-time positions (for instance, in elementary schoolteaching for artists, carpenters, and others with valuable skills).

Several locals of the Service Employees International Union in Santa Clara County, California, and Seattle, Washington, have established minimal quotas of part-time career positions in their contracts. The federal government might mandate such options for all who would choose them, as in the Federal Employees Part-Time Career Employment Act of 1978, or Section 709 of the Professional Education Act of 1976, which required part-time hospital residency options where federal funds were involved.

Some competitive project grants could be assigned preferentially to certain categories, such as late entrants into a career or part-timers. This would be little more than an extension of some of the principles already at work in some public agencies (such as NEH) for those who have limited or no access to various kinds of opportunities.

Tax incentives can be granted to firms introducing desirable work and training options. And some version of the Swedish system of equity subsidies, now used for the limited purpose of encouraging balanced male/female training and hiring for specific occupations on federally funded development projects, could serve wider aims. The range of state policies and administrative mechanisms is broad and potentially flexible. Only further research and experimentation could indicate which are the most promising. But without active state or federal administration, relatively equal opportunities in the social division of labor would be impossible.

No single organizational (or enterprise) approach could conceivable achieve equality and justice. Equality in the division of labor—indeed a very complex goal to achieve—can only be relative, incomplete, problematic, and conflicting. And it can only be achieved, if at all, through free and flexible choices in an open

dissent

ARE YOU MOVING?

•

Second-class publications are *not* forwarded by your Post Office, but returned (at senders' expense) to be repackaged and reshipped: . . . *Three postage payments, for us, plus weeks of delay*. . . . To avoid this, and help DISSENT, *please notify us one month in advance of your change of address.* Send both old and new address to:

•

DISSENT, 521 Fifth Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10017

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

labor market, democratically regulated and complemented by flexible state policies and administrative mechanisms. Equality could never be administered directly, through mandated assignments, work brigades, or universally established limits on the work week. Here I completely agree with Michael Walzer, although I think that it is too hasty to conclude that the "class of hard workers" could not be eliminated without state coercion[10]—too hasty, that is, without more thorough exploration of the kinds of diverse and flexible work options, career lines, labor-market structures, and state policies of the kind outlined here.

Flexible work options could also create sticky problems for the labor movement in the short term. Many workers fear that these new work options could make them more vulnerable to managerial and corporate power in the workplace and the labor market. Permanent part-time work and job sharing might increase insecurity and threaten benefits, erode labor standards, and downgrade occupational status. They could be used to institutionalize the inferior status of women, and they might make union organizing more difficult. They also can distract from the goal of shortening the work week for all without loss in pay. Successful union bargaining around more flexible options, however, shows that none of these problems are insurmountable.[11]

Without a perspective on how the division of labor can be transformed in an egalitarian and democratic manner, the labor movement will remain on the defensive amidst the profound changes that are now occurring. A new vision is needed to respond creatively to this crisis, and a politics for the self-management of time is as necessary as a politics for the control of technology.

Notes

[1] See Carmen Sirianni, "Production and Power in a Classless Society: A Critical Analysis of the Utopian Dimensions of Marxist Theory," *Socialist Review*, September–October 1981, pp. 33–82.

[2] Such technologies, needless to say, have the potential to degrade as well as enrich work, depending on the powers defining how they are introduced. See Richard Moore and Elizabeth Marsis, "Telecommuting: Sweatshop at Home Sweet Home?" *In These Times*, April 18, 1984, pp. 12–13.

[3] Carmen Sirianni, "Participation, Opportunity and Equality: Toward a Pluralist Organizational Model," in Frank Fischer and Carmen Sirianni, eds., *Critical Studies in Organization and Bureaucracy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), pp. 481–502.

[4] Fred Best, *Flexible Life Scheduling* (New York: Praeger, 1980).

[5] See Stanley Nollen, *New Work Schedules in Practice* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1982); Maureen McCarthy and Gail Rosenberg, *Work Sharing: Case Studies* (Kalamazoo: Upjohn Institute, 1981); Gretl Meier, *Job Sharing* (Kalamazoo: Upjohn Institute, 1979).

[6] Ann Harriman, *The Work/Leisure Tradeoff* (New York: Praeger, 1982), pp. 31 ff.

[7] I am following here the classifications of Robert Althauser and Arne Kalleberg, "Firms, Occupations, and the Structure of Labor Markets: A Conceptual Analysis," in *Sociological Perspectives and Labor Markets*, Ivar Berg, ed. (New York: Academic Press, 1981), pp. 119–49; see also Kenneth Spenner, Luther Otto, and Vaughn Call, *Career Lines and Careers* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1982).

Internal labor markets include any cluster of jobs that have three basic structural features: (a) a job ladder, with (b) entry only at the bottom, and (c) movement up the ladder associated with progressive development of knowledge or skill. Secondary labor markets lack job ladders, development of skill or knowledge, significant investment in training by either employee or employer, limited entry requirements, and options for firm-specific tenure.

[8] See Carmen Sirianni and Michele Eayrs, "Work, Time, Equality," *Telos*, forthcoming.

[9] A number of public sabbatical proposals were made in the 1970s in Congress, at the state level, by the vice-chair of the Civil Service Commission under Carter, and by various academics. None are adequate as they stand, but they are quite suggestive. For a brief discussion of these, see Fred Best, *Work Sharing* (Kalamazoo: Upjohn Institute, 1981), pp. 74–84.

[10] Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), chap. 6.

[11] See Nollen, *New Work Schedules in Practice*, espec. chap. 4, for interesting union initiatives. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Harry Kahn and Keith Melville

Corporate Merger Madness

Questions about corporate takeovers become more and more insistent. There is a fear that takeovers sap America's competitive strength and contribute to an unhealthy obsession with short-term growth.

While defenders of takeovers have taken the position that few negative effects have been demonstrated, a strong case can be made against them. Peter Drucker recently commented that the SEC, founded to protect investors against the financial wolves, has by encouraging takeovers become the protector of the wolves. What needs to be widely understood is not only the huge amounts of capital that are consumed by these transactions, but also their harmful effects.

CONSIDER THE EVIDENCE on merger activity over the past year. In the first six months of 1984, 1,337 mergers were consummated, which represents an 18-percent increase over the figure for the first half of 1983. There has been a frenzy of activity as, month after month, deal-makers have put together buyouts, takeovers, and mergers involving small-family businesses and multimillion-dollar firms.

The most marked increase has been in the "megadeals." In the first nine months of 1984, according to figures compiled by W. T. Grimm & Co., merger consultants and publishers of the *Mergerstat Review*, there was a record number of 18 transactions of $1 billion or more. The value of merger transactions in that period was a record-breaking $103.2 billion, almost double the $53.3 billion total for the first nine months of 1983.

The investment bankers who act as brokers in these transactions have never had it so good. Just one recent deal—the Getty Oil/Texaco merger—generated $47 million in fees for four such firms. For such firms as Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs, First Boston, and Kidder Peabody, mergers and acquisitions are a most lucrative operation. But the size of those fees, and the zeal with which investment bankers pursue deals, only underscores the question: In the midst of this high-level wheeling and dealing, who's looking out for the public interest?

Felix Rohatyn, a partner of Lazard Frères & Co.—a firm that will earn more than $10 million for arranging mergers this year—has expressed serious reservations about the size of those fees and the apparent lack of concern about the effects of mergers. "More and more," he says, "corporate customers are looking upon investment bankers not as advisers but as people peddling companies—some kind of buccaneers, samurai, or gunslingers—who will do anything to get a deal done."

It is likely that the merger wave has not yet crested. More mergers can be expected in the auto and steel business, and in financial services. It is likely, too, that some of the industries that have not been seriously affected by the merger wave—such as the high-technology sector—will feel its impact.

At a time when the public is becoming increasingly concerned about short-sighted management objectives and underinvestment in productivity-enhancing technologies, it is essential to keep in mind this unseemly spectacle that Bill Moyers characterized as "cannibals gorging on one another."

THE QUESTION of whether such corporate mergers are in the public interest was raised in a particularly blatant form by the Bendix/Martin Marietta

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

affair—an example of a new breed of merger, the hostile takeover. This one provided a prominent display of large egos at work in corporate boardrooms, and it revealed how much time and effort companies vulnerable to takeovers have to put into their defense against them.

The Bendix affair raised too many questions for the Reagan administration to let the matter pass without further scrutiny. There was so much latent concern about the dangers of permissiveness on antitrust matters that the Administration was forced to act. As a result, the SEC announced formation of an advisory committee on tender offers, presided over by its chair.

Members of the Senate Banking Committee urged the committee to undertake a broad examination of the corporation's obligations to its stockholders, employees, and the community in a takeover situation. But if they were hoping for some assistance from the committee in thinking about merger policy, their hopes were in vain.

In this particular chicken coop, the foxes were quite numerous. Several of the committee members were investment bankers or lawyers specializing in launching unfriendly tender offers. It was not surprising, then, that the SEC panel defined its task narrowly, and limited recommendations to specific technical changes. The members of that group were unable to agree that any "substantial economic benefits or detriments of takeover activities have been conclusively established." They concluded a disappointingly narrow review of merger policy by taking a position compatible with the hands-off approach of the Administration.

It is not sufficient to conclude, as the Shad Commission did, that until "substantial economic detriments" are conclusively established, no further measures should be taken to deter takeovers. There are persuasive arguments against the current wave of mergers.

One argument for mergers is that, through the synergistic effect of combining firms, new firms are created that are stronger and more competitive. In fact, says Walter B. Kissinger, chairman of the Allen Group, "the claims for synergistic benefits may be good public relations, but typically they do not materialize. In most cases, the unique chemistry of a successful company eroded and often was destroyed."

Neither does the evidence suggest that mergers and acquisitions create long-term value for the shareholders of the acquiring company. The Boston Consulting Group recently surveyed more than 50 large public acquisitions that have taken place over the past five years to determine how such acquisitions affect the value of the stock. Their results show that stock prices for companies making such acquisitions *declined* by an average of 4 percent in the months surrounding the announcement date, and typically did not recover this loss. More important is what happens to the long-term performance of the stock:

> In the five years following these acquisitions, it is extremely unusual to find improvements in growth or profitability that are significant enough to provide a reasonable return on the acquisition price including the premium. Equally unusual, therefore, is a significant improvement in the acquirers' long-term stock price trend. The evidence indicates that the average public acquisition actually destroys a considerable amount of shareholder wealth, in both the short and the long term.

IF IT IS DIFFICULT to identify who the winners are when mergers and acquisitions take place (other than executives protected by "golden parachutes," and the brokers who negotiate the deals), it is a simple matter to identify the losers. Mergers hurt average Americans indirectly because of lost tax revenues. As the laws currently stand, corporations are allowed to exclude from taxation 85 percent of the dividend income on their holdings in other companies' stock. Companies may also deduct interest on money borrowed to pay for the stock.

Most Americans are hurt by mergers in a more direct way, too. The suspicion of a takeover creates a climate of uncertainty that seriously undermines both morale and productivity. In one company after another threatened by takeover raids, employees—from senior managers down to rank-and-file office and factory workers—are demoralized.

When mergers are consummated, they typically result in job losses and disrupted communities. Precise figures are hard to come by, even in a visible merger such as the Bendix takeover. The official line from Allied's president Edward Hennessey is that only 175 jobs were lost as a result of the merger of Allied and Bendix, and that all of the jobs lost were from the corporate offices of the Bendix Corporation in Southfield, Michigan. Hennessey stated that all but 25 of the 175 people let go have found new jobs. "When you consider that the combined companies have in excess of 100,000 people," said Hennessey, "I don't think that's too bad."

Although that merger did not lead to massive layoffs, Hennessey's figures are somewhat deceptive. Many Bendix employees accepted early retirement or bailed out prior to the merger. And there was a significant amount of premerger "dumping"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at four Bendix plants in the Detroit area. The jobs lost because of those sales are not included in Hennessey's figures. Furthermore, many Bendix employees who wanted to retain jobs with the parent company were forced to move out of state—especially to a large Allied plant in Morristown, New Jersey.

What is notably absent from the Reagan administration's deliberations about antitrust policy is a concern for what economists refer to as the "external effects" of mergers and acquisitions. Rick Karas, president of UAW Local 155 in Michigan, which included many workers affected by the Bendix merger, describes its effect as "very traumatic" for many residents of the area.

> From my perspective [says Karas], the whole Bendix-Allied thing was a disaster. A good, profitable company with good employees was reduced to a shambles. Ordinary people—the rank and file as well as nonbargaining-unit people like clericals and engineers—got the short end of the stick. They lost their jobs while the corporate heads were lining their pockets.
>
> It's sad to see how people suffered—people with 20 to 30 years in the company. They poured their lifeblood into Bendix. If they were lucky enough to find another job, it probably pays $3 to $4 less per hour than they were making at Bendix.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE to deter corporate takeovers that are not in the public interest? Before another prominent hostile takeover forces Congress to take action, there should be serious discussion of measures that might be taken to prevent such mergers.

There has been increasing interest in Washington in the way the problem is approached in Britain, where the government routinely refers unfriendly merger bids to a "takeover panel" for a final "yes" or "no." That panel provides a mechanism for judging whether, on balance, a takeover is likely to be beneficial to the various parties concerned—including stockholders and the public. Some people will respond that in this country it is neither desirable nor efficient to appoint another government agency to make such judgments.

An alternative is to revise the antitrust laws. Some practices—such as bidding wars, which lead to overvalued shares—should be banned. A more fundamental rethinking of antitrust laws should take place, and it might begin with a measure such as the one proposed by Rep. Peter Rodino. In his words, "It's time to send a clear signal to corporate America that we will no longer tolerate unrestrained warfare between top managements for control of corporate assets." Rodino's proposed law, H.R. 3561, would require firms proposing large mergers to bear the burden of proof. That would reverse the current situation in which regulatory agencies have to argue persuasively that a merger would *not* be in the public interest.

The Rodino bill would require the assistant attorney general or the Federal Trade Commission to determine that mergers of companies with assets in excess of $5 billion serve the public interest. If that bill becomes law, companies proposing mergers would have to show that the acquisition would (1) increase competition; (2) result in more productive management of corporate assets, new goods and services, or a reduction in the price of existing goods and services; (3) not unduly disrupt employees or management; (4) not result in excessive transaction fees.

The Rodino bill deserves serious consideration because it acknowledges what this Administration has overlooked. The "external" costs of mergers—their human impact, their impact on morale, jobs, and communities—outweigh the alleged benefits to society.

The takeover phenomenon and its manifold effects raise further questions about whether deci-

"The President Is a Cheerful Man"

A king who is a good-natured man is in a fair way of being a great tyrant. A king ought to feel concern for all to whom his power extends; but a good-natured man cares only about himself. If he has a good appetite, eats and sleeps well, nothing in the universe besides can disturb him. The destruction of the lives or liberties of his subjects will not stop him in the least of his caprices, but will concoct well with his bile, and "good digestion wait on appetite, and health on both." He will send out his mandate to kill and destroy with the same indifference or satisfaction that he performs any natural function of his body. The consequences are placed beyond the reach of his imagination, or would not affect him if they were not, for he is a fool, and good-natured. A good-natured man hates more than anyone else whatever thwarts his will, or contradicts his prejudices; and if he has the power to prevent it, depend upon it, he will use it without remorse and without control.

—WILLIAM HAZLITT, "On Good-Nature" □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sions that may be in the interest of chief executive officers are also in the public interest. It should be public policy to balance the interests of companies seeking acquisitions and the interests of the target companies, their employees, and shareholders. The Administration's lenient antitrust policies have slighted the human impact of mergers in the name of economic efficiency. □

Hersh Smolar

Vengeance for the Jewish Victory

HERSH SMOLAR, *a native of Poland and a much-decorated Resistance hero, was head of the Minsk ghetto underground during World War II and a member of the high command of an entire Partisan zone comprising four brigades. After the war he returned to Poland and became one of the leaders of the Jewish community and editor-in-chief of the Yiddish newspaper* Folks-Shtimme *("People's Voice"). With the outbreak of anti-Semitism in Poland in 1967, he was removed from both posts. He left Poland in 1971 and took up residence in Israel, where he is a Fellow at the Diaspora Research Institute in Tel Aviv.*

This article is drawn from Smolar's memoir, Last Stand, Last Hope, *written in Yiddish and published by the Y. L. Peretz Verlag, Tel Aviv, 1982. The English translation is by* YURI SUHL *and* MAX ROSENFELD.—EDS.

When the first news of the Six-Day War reached us, we realized that we were faced with an unexpected threat. In the beginning it was not too difficult for us at the *Folks-Shtimme* to print the war news both on the basis of reports issued by the Polish News Agency and on foreign sources. But when the victories of the Israeli army began to dominate the news, it became necessary for us to present the information in a "more balanced" way. Thus, for example, we interspersed news items from Western agencies with Polish News Agency releases. We called for "peace without annexation." Jews coming to our editorial offices or seeing us on the street would shake our hand and thank us for making accurate information available. They understood why we had to print the views of Maki and Rakach side by side.[1]

Our maneuvering was blocked by Stefan Olszowski, member of the Central Committee in charge of the press, who summoned me and issued a blunt warning: there could not be two centers reporting on Polish foreign policy. *We* are the center, he said, not you at the *Folks-Shtimme.* From that moment on, our portrayal of the Six-Day War echoed the line of the official Polish press.

This was only the beginning. Just a few days after the war had ended, we were confronted with an ultra anti-Semitic diatribe by party leader Wladislaw Gomulka. Speaking at the Congress of Polish Trade Unions, Gomulka vented his fury about Israel on the Jews of Poland, branding us a "Fifth Column." This comparison of the Polish Jews, whose Naftali Botwin Brigade had been in the front line defending the Spanish Republic, with the Fifth Column—Franco's agents—outraged every Jew in the country, as well as many honest gentile Poles. Even Edward Ochab and Adam Rapacki, who were members of the Politburo, protested vigorously and demanded that this tirade should not be published.

Gomulka was forced to yield on this narrow issue, but the official press issued elaborate, viru-

[1] Maki—Communist party of Israel—was mainly composed of Jews and critical of the Soviet Union; it is now defunct.

Rakach—a second Communist party of Israel—is composed mostly of Arabs and adheres to Soviet policy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lently anti-Jewish "commentaries" on his speech. These commentaries, distributed in special brochures, echoed and amplified the Arab-Soviet claim that the Jewish state came innto existence through aggressive war against the Arabs. This set the tone for the mass production of such "literary works" as *The Revolution Beneath the Pyramids* by Kazimierz Sidor, Poland's ambassador to Egypt, who characterized the Jews as scabby-headed descendants of lepers.

WHAT MOTIVATED this explosion of anti-Semitic fury? Not one Polish historian or statesman, even during the period of liberalization, has ever dealt with this honestly.

First, in 1967, Gomulka was responding to the ascendancy of the lifelong anti-Semites Mieczeslaw Moczar and Boleslaw Piasecki, who had been organizing for years to seize power in the party. By stealing these anti-Semites' thunder, Gomulka managed in 1967 to strengthen his position in the party—at least for the moment—and to get Moczar removed from his power base as head of security.

Second, the Polish people's great sympathy and admiration for the heroic Israelis in 1967 showed the party and the government how remote and isolated they were from popular sentiments. The Poles' admiration for Israel stemmed in part from their sense of their own history: they, too, had often risen in armed struggle for independence. There was also an element of surprise: Poles had always regarded the Jews as ill-suited to warfare, and suddenly—a great, daring Jewish victory! The victory was especially sweet to the Poles because it was an indirect defeat of the military influence of the Soviet Union, which had prodded Egypt and Syria to attack Israel. Mass hatred of the Soviet Union and joy in its defeat gave rise to a widespread Polish quip: "Our little Jews beat the Soviet Arabs!"

Support for Israel came from surprising places. The *entire staff* of the Polish air force, in a special document addressed to the army's General Staff, expressed its admiration for the strategy, tactics, and personnel of the Israeli armed forces. This upset not only Gomulka and the Polish army command but, even more, the leaders of the Warsaw Pact military forces. It was a sign that the Polish army was not too "secure." A purge of high officers—à la Moscow—soon followed.

These events contributed heavily to the anti-Semitic incitement by Gomulka and company. But a reaction to this racist outburst came quickly. At the next plenum of the Central Committee of the Polish Communist party some blunt speeches were made, even by a few conservative leaders (for example, by former government ministers Julian Takarski and Boleslaw Ruminski) opposing this incitement of Jew-hatred.

This opposition, however, was unable to stop the anti-Jewish campaign of the Gomulka leadership. The terror organs intensified their hunt for "Zionists and Revisionists." The merest suspicion of sympathy for embattled Israel resulted in human tragedy. There were instances when people who had gathered for family or birthday parties at which Jews happened to be present were punished for engaging in "celebrations of Israel's victory." On this pretext, the editors of the most popular weekly, *Kobieta* ("The Woman") were dismissed from their posts and expelled from the party. The people grew angry about the government actions, but increasingly cautious in their relationships with Jews.

After diplomatic relations with the Jewish state had been broken off, the Polish authorities organized a shameful and brutal "farewell" for the members of the Israeli embassy. A group of plain-clothes secret police, specially selected for their "non-Aryan" looks and headed by a Polish colonel who definitely looked Jewish, were sent to the airport to shout insults, to signify that even "Jews" were demonstrating their hatred for the state of Israel!

Next, the Central Committee ordered all party organs, unions, and cultural associations, and especially their leaders, to adopt resolutions based on Gomulka's anti-Jewish speech, condemning the "Israeli aggression" and Zionism as an instrument of imperialism. The Polish press now was inundated with demagogic anti-Semitic articles and resolutions.

At a special meeting of members of the party's Executive Committee and the Warsaw Committee of the Jewish Social-Cultural Organization, the proposal was made to adopt a resolution condemning "the Israeli aggression against the Arab countries." Representatives of the party's Warsaw City Committee came to this meeting to present the text of such a resolution. During the voting, not one hand was raised in favor! This was the only time in the history of the Warsaw City Committee that such a thing had happened and, at once, "higher authorities" were informed.

AT THIS POINT, the *Folks-Shtimme* began to receive complaints from the Central Committee: "Why are you silent?" At a meeting of the presidium of our executive committee, we agreed upon the text of a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

resolution proposed by David Sfard.[2] The Central Committee replied that we had not gone far enough. A revision of our resolution was also rejected. We then called a broader meeting of our members in order to inform them of the pressure that was brought to bear upon us. Those who attended the meeting sat there with their mouths shut tight; it was common knowledge that there were persons among us who would promptly pass relevant information along to the "proper authorities."

To break our obstinacy, the party's Central Committee, together with the heads of the Ministry for Internal Affairs, took steps to isolate us from our own local organizations. From towns and cities throughout the country we received information that local leaders of the Jewish Social-Cultural Organization had been summoned to party committees, where they were threatened with expulsion from the party if they refused to condemn "Zionist aggression." And our local activists were "invited" to meet with the political police, who brought all kinds of pressure to bear upon them to disregard our executive committee's resolution—and to condemn Israel "spontaneously." Tragic letters came in from local leaders of our organization. One pleaded: "Don't destroy us. Adopt a [suitable] resolution, otherwise it will be the end of us all."

Before long, our paper was receiving resolutions from local Jewish executive committees that were in complete accord with the official line. The Polish Press Bureau kept checking on us to see whether we were printing these resolutions. Even when we did, *Trybuna Mazowiecka*, organ of the party's Warsaw City Committee, still denounced us. Remarkably, the secretary of the Warsaw Committee (a man named Kociolek) tried to speak to the Jews in more moderate tones. "We understand," he said, "the experience of our Jewish comrades and their attitude toward Israel, but. . . ." Soon after he uttered these words, Kociolek was removed from his post.

He was replaced by Jusef Kempo, an anti-Semite with the mentality of an SS man. On March 26, 1968, *Trybuna Mazowiecka* published an article headlined "Who Are You?" Among other things, it said: "We want to know with whom we are living under the same roof. . . . Whom does the Social-Cultural Organization serve?" Three days later, in the poison-pages of this same party organ, came the unmistakable threat: "How long must we wait for their statement?"

On April 1, 1968, *Trybuna Luda*, the central party paper, printed a cunning article by Henryk Saniowski. He wrote: ". . . I fail to understand the silence of the executive committee and the Warsaw section of the Social-Cultural Organization of the Jews in Poland on so many questions. . . ."

A source of encouragement for us in those days was the position of various Polish artists who expressed their solidarity with the Jews by joining our Social-Cultural Organization, by cooperating with us, or by demonstrating their sympathy in their artistic work. (Among them were, for example, the poet Jerzy Picowski; the writer Adam Wlodek; the painters Zdzislaw, Maciey Lachur, Jerzy Duda-Gracz—and S. Kobylinski, who painted a series of Jewish figures from the vanished *shtetls*.) Jan Kofta, satirist of the *Pod Egida* Theater, changed his name publicly and officially to Jonah (Yoineh), a name that anti-Semites pronounce derisively. He still uses that name today.

WE DID NOT CAVE IN under the pressure from the Ministry or the growing anti-Jewish agitation in the Polish press. What finally compelled us to condemn Israel was the threat of an immediate pogrom.

I then was told by Leyb Domb[3] that he had been summoned to a private meeting by a member of that Politburo and the Foreign Ministry—our good friend Adam Rapacki. Rapacki warned Leyb Domb that Moczar was preparing "an outburst of popular anger" against the "allies of Zionism"—the leaders of the Social-Cultural Organization who had refused to join with the "entire Polish people" in condemning Israeli aggression. An attack on Number 5 Nowogrodski Street (the building that housed all the Jewish institutions) could come any day. It was still possible to avert this tragedy by making a statement in accordance with the general political line.

I saw before me the plainclothesmen who had been hanging around the door of the Polish Literary Society when I had left there in the early morning hours. These men were capable of anything—waiting only for the signal to settle accounts with the most eminent Polish writers who,

---

[2] David Sfard was a leading Yiddish poet, editor of the literary monthly *Literarishe Shriftn*. He emigrated to Israel as a result of the anti-Semitic campaign of the 1960s; he died in Jerusalem in 1981.

[3] As Leopold Trepper, Leyb Domb had headed the famed Soviet anti-Nazi intelligence group known as "The Red Orchestra." After the war he was rewarded by Stalin with a ten-year prison term, after which he returned to his native Poland, where he assumed the leadership of the Jewish Social-Cultural Organization and became the director of the publishing house *Yiddishe Bukh*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by a large majority, had condemned the anti-Semitic, reactionary Gomulka policy and stated that it was really, at bottom, also aimed at Poland's national culture.

I saw before me the disguised Moczar thugs who on March 8, 1968 had broken into the courtyard of Warsaw University and brutally beaten students and professors.

And I saw the men in militia uniforms who more than 20 years earlier had helped to murder the Jews of Kielce. . . .

So I concurred with Leyb Domb's proposal that we issue a statement in accord with the official line. My standing with the party's Central Committee was, however, greatly diminished. (My two sons and my daughter-in-law were then in the Mokotow jail for participating in the student protests of 1967–68.) The presidium therefore decided to give my proposed text to presidium members Shmuel Tenenblat and Israel Felhendler for their editing and emendation.

BROKEN IN SPIRIT, we avoided each other's eyes. We discussed routine matters, items of practical work, without alluding to the danger that faced us all.

A comforting word came to me from my "old friend" in the Polish Academy of Sciences. "In the end," he said, "your resistance lasted longer than that of the entire Polish army in September 1939, longer than the resistance of the entire Polish population during the siege of Warsaw."

But our real consolation was the fact that not a single drop of Jewish blood was shed in that frightful situation. □

Ann Douglas

Bruce Springsteen and Narrative Rock

The Art of Extended Urgency

On May 9, 1974, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, rock critic Jon Landau heard Bruce Springsteen for the first time in concert. In a now famous endorsement, he testified: "I saw my rock and roll past flash before my eyes. And . . . *I saw rock and roll's future and its name is Bruce Springsteen.*" Springsteen had released two albums, *Greetings from Asbury Park* (1973) and *The Wild, the Innocent, and the E–Street Shuffle* (1973), both more widely praised by critics than bought by rock fans; he was at work on what was to be his first big-selling album, *Born to Run* (1975). Could he possibly live up to or, for that matter, live with, such an accolade?

It is typical of Springsteen that neither the raves nor the attacks that inevitably followed Landau's tribute deflected his purpose. *Darkness on the Edge of Town* (1978), Springsteen's fourth album, marked his entrance into a period unbroken to this day, a period, in Pete Townshend's words, of "fucking triumph." He is now the major rock artist in the United States. And Landau's inflated claim holds some truth. Springsteen simultaneously evokes rock's past and validates its future. His is perhaps the most extended coherent expression of urgency in rock annals; in his work the intensity of rock and the patience of narrative play off and sustain each other.

When Bruce Springsteen surfaced to national fame in the mid-'70s, two notions about rock held wide currency. Contrary to the judgment of early skeptics, rock had demonstrated that, in its broadest sense, it was a musical genre as long-lived as one of its parents, jazz. It could create classics: singles like Chuck Berry's "Sweet Sixteen," the Five Satins' "In the Still of the Night," and Neil Young's "Helpless"; albums like the Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967), Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks* (1968), and Bob Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks* (1975). What had been in the 1950s

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and 1960s the unprecedented collective autobiography of a generation's bodies and souls in motion was providing in the mid-1970s the structure and dynamic of memory and inspiration for that generation and its successors.

Yet if the music lasted, it was observed, the musicians did not—with important consequences for the long-term nature of their art. The deaths of Brian Jones, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, the battle with drugs and relative decline of Eric Clapton and Bob Dylan, the total, if at moments fascinating, commercialization of the Rolling Stones: all suggested that, as an ongoing process, rock was as much a splendid collage of peaks and collapses as a tradition.

SINCE 1975, IT HAS BEEN Springsteen's distinction to perpetuate rock as music and a culture, in archetypical rock fashion, by breaking rules. His career has defied the quasi-legendary boundaries of the rock star's creative energies, and the limits this glamorized doom places on rock music's reach for historical and emotional extension.

A rock star, Springsteen's career to date asserts, can find his soul in his music ("I was dead til I was thirteen [and bought my first guitar]," Springsteen has said) and not die or sell out. Of all the arts, rock alone still allows for complete and open credulity in the American dream. "Rock and roll, deliver me from nowhere," Springsteen fervently commands ("Open All Night," *Nebraska*), and it did. Born of poor working-class parents in Freehold, New Jersey, in 1949, a quick community-college dropout, Springsteen always frankly longed to be a "rock and roll star" ("When I was nine I couldn't imagine anyone not wanting to be Elvis"); and he knows and loves what holding that title entails.

Springsteen, like his predecessors, like the best purveyors of mass consumption, promises, first and foremost, to bring it home to you, to *deliver*. At his concerts, in the moments while the band is gathering on stage and the audience starts to croon "Bruce," the air vibrates with the shared happiness—a hybrid of liberation and dependency—only great mass art can bring. Every person of the thousands present wants exactly the same thing at the same time, and they are going to get it: Springsteen and his music, almost nonstop for a staggering three-and-a-half hours of enduring exhilaration.

Carrying the full messianic charge of the greatest rock performers—Little Richard, Elvis, Joplin, Hendrix—Springsteen puts himself on the line in concert and on record. Yet he never stands on the firing line that has enticed predecessors like Joplin. He gives everything to his audience but his ability, drawn from his music, to cohere in his own eyes without theirs upon him. He has chosen, for over a decade now, to remain in his home state, New Jersey, to keep working with the same band—all but one from working-class New Jersey backgrounds like his own. Since his break, in 1978, from his first manager, Mike Appel, he has retained complete control over the production of his music. He has avoided drugs, celebrity, any curtailment of his power of sustained creative commentary. By 1985 it is clear that Springsteen, unlike John Lennon and Bob Dylan, his peers among rock lyricists, is writing the bulk of his best, most deeply interwoven songs in his thirties.

As a working-class boy, Springsteen learned his trade through an apparently undisciplined process of total saturation—he calls it "assimilation" as opposed to "study"—in the cheapest media outlets of rock, the AM radio station and the single. As Dave Marsh, Springsteen's best critic, points out, this fast-food, hand-to-mouth apprenticeship is perhaps the most valuable method of mastery that the rock medium, with its constant supply of short-lived products, offers. Transience and permanency, interlocked in a working contradiction, is the name of the rock game, and the soul of Springsteen's music. He was a rock craftsman, and a fanatic of rock, from the start. Presenting in his music an exploration of rock history, he has kept alive the basic insistent beat and the upsurge of euphoric excitement familiar in rock since the 1950s. We recognize his music.

Springsteen's relative lack of interest in musical innovation, in the breakthroughs of his major predecessors, can provoke defensiveness in his admirers. Yet defense is not difficult. The hard-driving, stable sound of the E–Street Band and Springsteen's own fine if not riveting work on the guitar and harmonica grant support and leave room for the special fidelity, the utter loyalty of Springsteen's stories. The new possibilities of rock narrative rather than those of rock music have mattered most to Springsteen's art. Between his boyhood in the 1950s and his twenty-first birthday in 1970, rock writing was revolutionized. By 1970, rock artists sang not only of love but of everything from political protest to their most intimate lives. They routinely exceeded the old standard three-minute length of a song, and they produced albums musically and lyrically conceived as a single piece of work. Springsteen was to push these innovations to new limits.

ROCK HAS ALWAYS DRAMATIZED the evanescent and emotionally permanent moments of experience: the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

peaks and lows of finding and losing love, making it and failing, times when life is too acute to find perception an adequate response. By the early and mid-'70s, in the aftermath of Watergate and the youth movement, a number of rock's leading artists were trying less to snatch an archetypical moment from the lives of their *personae* than to convey through such a moment a sense of the entire emotional life—its reach and its limits—of those they sang about. Without dropping entirely into the heavily patterned forms of country or blues, retaining rock's emphasis on musical and lyrical shock, they pushed toward farther and stronger resonance. They covered both the explosion and the terrain on which it occurred. Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks* (1975) and Neil Young's astonishing three-record selection of his own work emblematically entitled *Decade* (1977) were the high signs of this new rock trend. But the momentum was broken and lost by the decline of a number of the artists involved, by shifts in the record industry, by changing needs in the rock audience itself. The nascent urge toward history, toward complete narrative, attenuated into nostalgia: the soft rock sound of Carly Simon, Cat Stevens, Gordon Lightfoot, and Rod Stewart, and the sentimental valorization of rock's preceding two decades.

A disbeliever in memory-lane music, Springsteen plays "oldies" in concert with the same inventive intensity that marks his own work. He appeared on the mid-'70s scene not to reminisce but to revive, maintain, and further a commitment to telling what Jon Landau has called "the whole damned story." Springsteen has written dozens of hard-hitting songs, classics of the glory of the single rock moment, but he is also rock's first sustained narrator; he has made himself responsible.

Several rock artists before Springsteen have released albums over the years that are best grasped consecutively as a single sequence: perhaps the Beatles' records between 1963 and 1970, certainly Bob Dylan's entire *corpus* from the early '60s to the present. Yet Springsteen has performed the task with a unique, masterful combination of instinct and self-consciousness. In a *Rolling Stone* interview published December 6, 1984, Springsteen said to Kurt Loder: "I was always interested in doing a *body* of work, albums that would relate and play off of each other. . . . I was very concerned about gettin' a group of characters and followin' them through their lives a little bit." He considers his albums "for at least the last six or seven years" (from *Darkness* through *Born in the U.S.A.*) bound together by common "themes." His preoccupation with narrative, his acquiescence to its dictates, is everywhere apparent: from the legendary length of his concerts and the unusual amount of time he takes to bring out an album (7 in 11 years) to the phrasing of his individual songs and the connections between albums.

Springsteen's ratio of words-to-music is not always melodic. The absolute fusion of his singing with the E-Street Band playing, one of the most exciting sounds in contemporary rock, is an achievement Springsteen does not always wish to bring off. Particularly in his early albums, but here and there in all of them, the words at times escape or, rather, redefine musical phrasing: there are too many of them, their enunciation seems clumsy; they matter too much to the speaker. Yet Springsteen's special timing is powerfully effective. His songs phrase themselves most tightly through bursts of anger ("Sometimes I feel so weak, I just want to explode,/ Explode and tear this whole town apart,/ Take a knife and cut this pain from my heart" ["The Promised Land," *Darkness*]), more loosely in cadences of compassion ("You don't have to live that life" ["Point Blank," *The River*]), and almost garrulously in interpolated efforts at crucial explanation ("Lately there ain't been much work because of the economy" ["The River"]). Intermittent awkwardness is an important and carefully mastered part of Springsteen's art: it suggests and engenders vulnerability in his protagonist and his audience. He can leave nothing out.

WHAT IS "THE WHOLE DAMNED STORY" that Springsteen unfolds with such scrupulous prodigality? Not one ever told in rock before, certainly not at such length and depth. In wildly aching lyrics and music as powerful as its subject, Springsteen has enhanced rock's power to fulfill America's deepest artistic purpose, one long familiar to such writers as Dreiser, Farrell, and Kerouac: its drive toward grotesquely commercial and heartbreakingly spiritual autobiography, its often frustrated impulse toward a complete account, the story of the neglected as well as the celebrated.

Springsteen conveys the lives and feelings of those he grew up with in back-town America: young men and women who have made rock the last form of heroism but have seldom been its heroes; those who did the fighting, and the losing, in Vietnam; the working classes and, more particularly, their young in-house spin-offs, sullen and stoic by turns; the non-street people periodically and obsessively ready for the street (their anthems are "Out on the Street" on *The River* and "Streets of Fire" on *Darkness*). Springsteen's protagonists often must labor while they know their work under-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

utilizes and overworks them. Their only alternatives to the deadening routine of what Springsteen calls "The Working Life" (*Darkness*) are the evanescent excitement of 7–11 stores, joyrides in souped-up cars, petty and not-so-petty crime, abortive romance and, for the lucky, a "band."

Like Farrell, Dreiser, and Kerouac, Springsteen's American literary forebears in unedited narrative art, he asserts that the reality of American life for many of its inhabitants is economic and emotional depression: material deprivation, chronic irritation and sorrow, and difficult, feckless feats of elation and acting-out. Flush times are protracted for those few who engineer and monopolize them; the underclasses share in prosperity only in savagely seized, heavily penalized moments, and in their dreams. "You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch)," Springsteen warns, and jeers (*The River*). And yet this depression is going on in America, the land Springsteen believes to be "a real big-hearted country, real compassionate." For him depression is a reality, and a betrayal. The question of the debt of Springsteen's protagonist to America, long and painfully overpaid at home and in Asia, is not of interest. What does America owe him? What can he get, if anything, from America? All Springsteen's lyrics—several of them virtual anthems of the anger of protest and the hope for deliverance—suggest that America must come back and through for its abandoned; an America still vital if only with their yet unquenched hope in it. "I believe in the promised land" (*Darkness*).

NARRATIVE FOLLOWS the scent of justice until the scent dies out, and then maps the vast terrain within the jurisdiction of justice but past its reach. Narrative is preoccupied with subsiding, the settling of accounts over time, with what is found and lost in sheer duration. It ultimately concerns itself with waste, with what Pynchon in *The Crying of Lot 49* mocked and mythologized as W.A.S.T.E., junkyards and scrap heaps filled with the debris of a land in which opulence and impoverishment are allocated by capricious yet collusive design. Above all, in Frederic Jameson's words, narrative presents the world of "worn things. . . . Those discarded objects that are used-up human lives." Rock, in Springsteen's hands, brings to this literary narrative material an intensified expression of the drab and explosive dynamics of the wearing-out process and, more important, an insistent sense of the fierce vitality to be found only in "used-up . . . lives." In "Badlands," on *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, the protagonist has "learned his facts real good": "poor man wanna be rich,/ rich man wanna be king,/ a king ain't satisfied/ till he rules everything." He wakes "up in the night/ with a fear" that he'll "spend [his] life waiting,/ for a moment that just don't come." Yet the chorus, courageously collective in contrast to the stanzas, vows:

> Badlands, you gotta live it every day,
> Let the broken hearts stand
> As the price you gotta pay,
> We'll keep pushing til it's understood,
> That those badlands start treating us good.

We hear in these words the essential Springsteen protagonist. His masculinity is assertive and embattled, his voice raw, his mood lunges from rage to seductiveness, from depression to exaltation. He conveys an urgency and an immediacy of contact that make sincerity a merely literary concept. A poet of profound emotional reach, Springsteen has none of Dylan's and Lennon's skill or interest in verbal special effects. The Springsteen protagonist is one of those "powerful illiterate persons" Perry Miller found at the center of America's most important writing. In all his incarnations, his chief demand is for the commodity that goes up in value as incomes, and lives, go down: other people's respect and, most of all, his own. Hence his quietly obsessive use of the titles "Sir," "Boy," and "Mister": people must ascertain and assert their places in relation to each other. He himself must "find out what I got" ("Badlands," *Darkness*). The struggle is difficult, ceaseless, and dramatic.

Darkness represents a turning point for the Springsteen protagonist. He is aware that his earlier defiance against a world that "beats back hope for sport," as Dave Marsh puts it, is unlikely to succeed. Yet, if he is no longer "Born to Run," or not for long, he is born to fight for and against "the promised land." The chorus of "The Promised Land" turns on the defiant line: "Mister, I ain't a boy, no, I'm a man." Anger is his self-esteem. *The River* (1980) marks a new chapter. "Independence Day," a song Springsteen performed in 1978 but specifically saved for *The River*, announces the later album's mood: emotional reconciliation of sorts, the protagonist's acknowledged relatedness to his inescapable heritage of economic and emotional impoverishment. The singer of "Independence Day," leaving home, tells the father he bitterly fought: "Papa, now I know the things you wanted that you could not say/ . . . I swear I never meant to take those things away." His dignity now depends in part on his capacity for forgiveness. The evangelical forward thrust of *Born to Run* and *Darkness* is absent. When the singer of *The River*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

looks to the future or "dreams of a better world," he sometimes wakes up "so downhearted, girl" ("Jackson Cage"). The question of *The River*, posed in the grief-ravaged title song, is the oldest American question: "Is a dream a lie if it don't come true, or is it something worse?"

Nebraska (1982), Springsteen's next album, picks up the story at precisely this point. In his many incarnations, the protagonist must reach his pain: he is a latter-day, working-class Thomas with his own doubts and blood-stained hands. The wild, random killer of "Nebraska" who tells his judge why he "did what [he] did": "Well, sir, I guess there's just a meanness in this world" ("Nebraska"); Joe Robert, a cop who can't arrest his "no-good" 'Nam veteran brother because he understands his torment and remembers the good days they shared ("Highway Patrolman"); a man dreaming of a now impossible reconciliation with his father, and with God ("My Father's House"): all have discovered that "our sins lie unatoned" ("My Father's House"). Most dreams don't come true and they are more valuable because of it, both as evidence against the prosecution, should this perpetually deferred case of injustice ever come to court, and as sustenance for the wiser, yet still "hungry heart" of the hit song of *The River*. Promises are cheap, promises run deep. Some dreams come true only in dreams: that is their limit and their depth.

Nebraska was the utterly private moment of the Springsteen *persona*, and Springsteen instinctively planned the album accordingly. The fiercely fraternal sound of the E–Street Band, a continuous musical pledge to a working community of the fervent, was irrelevant, even contradictory, to the eerie elisions of the solitary heart *Nebraska* elaborates. Springsteen planned to record the *Nebraska* material with his band; he ended by working alone for the only time in his career, accompanying himself on acoustic guitar and harmonica. He gave no tour centered on *Nebraska*. *Nebraska* explores the search for what a lived, even a partially lived-out, life has left at its source: the well is dark but not dry.

In *Born in the U.S.A.* (1984), Springsteen returned to his band, his audience, his public self. Older and yet reborn, he is here intent on carrying the still pressing case against every kind of injustice, not to the courts, but to the people whose representatives Springsteen's protagonists are. Fittingly, the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour is his longest and most widely attended to date. With Springsteen's new emphasis on the local politics and local lives of the places where he performs, the tour has taken on limited but genuine populist overtones. The record itself, *Born in the U.S.A.*, a retrospective of Springsteen's career and a promise of its future, is equally inclusive. All his resources are available to him and to us. The songs range from the memory of the "wildest" times of youth ("Bobby Jean") to the ongoing awareness of the facts of the laboring life ("Working on the Highway" and "Downbound Train"), from protest against oppression ("Born in the U.S.A." and "No Surrender") to the need for intimacy in a hostile world ("Cover Me," "Dancing in the Dark"). In *Born to Run*, *Darkness*, *The River*, *Nebraska*, and *Born in the U.S.A.*, Springsteen has completed the first rock pentalogy and given the primal American story a different ending. He chronicles the maturation, not the vitiation or abdication, of passion and protest.

SPRINGSTEEN GREW UP in America's dumping grounds, a world he found paralleled in AM radio with its infinite fast-vanishing, self-assertive singles. Springsteen's greatness lies in his grasp of the paradox of rock music in particular and mass culture in general: the quick but repeatable satisfaction of deep needs by expendable means; perhaps a hoax, but one that can offer genuine first aid for what feels like our incurable selves. The artifacts of mass culture, like those whose only recreation is to consume them, perish; yet they are always duplicated, sometimes remembered and, in moments of grace, revitalized in fresh transformations. "Everything dies, baby, that's a fact," Springsteen sings in "Atlantic City" (*Nebraska*); "Maybe everything that dies someday comes back."

In *Nebraska*'s last cut, which presents vignette after vignette of loss and futility, Springsteen's protagonist tells us: "at the end of every hard-earned day, people find some reason to believe." Very unlike the Beatles' "Hard Day's Night" with its witty inversion of narrative logic, this "hard-earned day," another cheap yet precious mass commodity, is rock narrative's central unit. The unconscious process of the decision to take on another "hard day," which all Springsteen's protagonists make, is rock narrative's essential dynamic. "You gotta hope," Springsteen recently told *Rolling Stone*'s Kurt Loder, "you're headed for higher ground." Everything depends, in the mid-1980s, in Springsteen's world, and ours, on the word "gotta." □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

William Adams

Woody Allen: Illusion & Reality

Cecelia sits alone in the middle of the nearly empty theater. She is wearing her old brown coat and matching hat. She holds a small bag of popcorn which she pecks at in a distracted way. But in her face there is absolute attention. Her eyes are pinned to the screen, as if she were witnessing a continuous miracle. She has a steady, remarkable smile that registers her surprise and delight. Cecelia is enthralled.

She does not usually go to matinees, but today is different. Cecelia has been fired. She decides not to go home because she is afraid of her husband Monk. He too is unemployed. He pitches pennies all day and comes home and drinks. When he drinks he gets mean and smacks Cecelia—"when you get out of line," he says. She cannot face his anger and the questions about what they will do now that she has lost her job.

So instead Cecelia goes to a show. She has seen this one before, but that does not matter. It is as though the picture becomes more real each time she sees it. Today she sits through four successive showings. But she is unprepared for what happens in the middle of the fourth. Tom Baxter, the young romantic hero, suddenly stops delivering his lines and looks right at Cecelia. She turns to look behind her, thinking that he must be looking at someone else. But no, it is Cecelia. Tom Baxter then speaks to her, steps forward, and leaves the movie. He takes her by the hand and asks her to go away with him. Cecelia protests: "You can't leave," she tells him, "you're in the movies." But Tom explains that he has fallen in love with her and that he wants his freedom. He is charming, overwhelmingly sincere. Bewildered, Cecelia gives in, and together they leave the theater.

This magical scene is one of the principal moments in *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, Woody Allen's recent film about life and the movies in a small town during the 1930s. It is a film built around a familiar but still enchanting assortment of Allen characters and motifs. Cecelia, the movie fanatic; Tom, the hero, perfectly virtuous, handsome; Gil Shepard, the actor who plays Tom, vain, superficial, and a liar; and Monk, the gruff and unemployed husband who slaps Cecelia around and then reels her in with remorse and promises. Behind all this, the seedy New Jersey town, the tenements, the movie house, the Great Depression, and a troupe of hilarious bit characters that wander in and out of the action.

The story of *The Purple Rose of Cairo* is the story of Cecelia's comic and painful obsession with the movies. But it is also a film about a complex, and much less comic, idea. Through Cecelia's unhappiness and obsession, Allen attempts to say something about how films work in our culture, about why and how they matter to us. To stretch matters only a little, the real subject of this film is ideology. This, as understood in this work, is by no means a simple term. "The movies," it suggests, are at the same time mystifying illusions and powerful, subversive instances of imagination. In a medium that is obsessively self-referential but rarely self-reflective, it is a serious and important message.

That ideology is the central problem of *The Purple Rose of Cairo* is hardly a secret stashed away in some obscure corner of the film. As soon as Tom Baxter pops out of the screen like a grape bursting through its skin, the entire story turns around the meaning of the strange and often hilarious relationship between the imaginary world of films and the real world of daily life. As one exasperated bit character puts it, "the real ones want their lives to be fictions, and the fictional ones want their lives to be real." It is a statement intended to describe the disarray caused by Bax-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ter's rebellion, but it works just as well for the film's wider purposes. Coming to terms with how films work as cultural documents means coming to terms with the relationship between the "real ones" and the "fictions" they spin about themselves.

For the great majority of the characters in the film, getting that relationship right means getting Tom Baxter back into the movie where he belongs. Characters just can't walk out of movies, as everyone reminds Tom; it isn't done. It isn't done in part, the film suggests, because most of us feel a need for the imaginary to remain unreal, impossible. That is easy to understand when other people's imaginations threaten what we have. Monk is happy to have Cecelia out of his hair on the nights she goes to the movies, but he is tormented by a suddenly living Tom who might deliver Cecelia from his domination. The theater manager worries about his future in a world where there are no institutionalized fictions, where the seam between the real and the imaginary is no longer fixed.

But the story also implies that we prefer even our own fantasies straight up, as mere distractions that do not bother us with the business of becoming real. Both the audience and Tom's fellow characters rebel when the fictional universe is disrupted by the real. Suddenly lacking a crucial player, the narrative structure of the film-within-a-film comes unhinged. The characters wander about complaining and wondering what to do. The real audience begins to complain and argue too. "I want what happened in the movie last week to happen this week," says one of the patrons. Tom's act of defiance may be miraculous, but it is not "the movies" and that, after all, is what we want.

There is, however, something more complicated than either self-interest or the habits of settled roles in this confinement of the imaginary to the unreal and unrealizable. When Tom Baxters in other theaters begin forgetting their lines, Raoul Hirsch, the film's quintessential Hollywood producer, frets over the possibility of a mass revolt of fictional characters against their real producers. That thought disturbs Hirsch not only because it threatens "the movies" but, ultimately, the film implies, because it threatens the social order that supports this very special form of imaginary life. The real danger is not only that other Tom Baxters will insist on becoming real but that Cecelia will forget her lines too, that she will demand to become what she dreams of being in her movie fantasies. For the imaginary to cease to be the imaginary, the real must cease to be the real.

What happens in the interrupted, film-within-the-film in *The Purple Rose of Cairo* is thus a model for what might happen in the real world as soon as the imaginary ceases to be merely imaginary. "I don't have to be a maître d' anymore," shouts a bit character in the inner film when he learns that Tom Baxter has broken free of his character. Similarly, things cannot go on as before if Cecelia, and all the Cecelias of the world, refuse *their* parts. Like the inner story, the larger story, the social order itself, will have to come undone. Tom Baxter must be gotten back into the film because imagination loosed from conventional forms is dangerously subversive.

But what does this in turn suggest about film, or at least those films that Raoul Hirsch and his allies have a common interest in restoring to the dark safety of the movie theater? It suggests, quite obviously, that movies soften and obscure the existing pattern of social relationships by proposing fantastic and thoroughly symbolic solutions to the problems people live. The imaginary to which Cecelia flees in order to forget her poverty and her husband (the Copacabana, "penthouses, the desert, kissing on the dance floor") blurs both what she is fleeing from and what she must do and imagine if things are to be different for her. From the side of the imaginary and the fictive, Woody Allen sounds suddenly like Marx on the theme of religious illusion. Not only are we caught in a world that requires illusions, but the ways in which we dream, imagine, fantasize only deepen our powerlessness. The criticism of film, *The Purple Rose of Cairo* argues, half in earnest, half in jest, is therefore the embryonic criticism of this vale of tears of which movies are the halo.

QUITE APPROPRIATELY, given his profession, Woody Allen finds such high seriousness amusing. In the midst of the anarchy that Tom's defiance creates within the inner narrative, yet another bit character leaps onto the set and, in unmistakably Marxist–Leninist tones, urges his fellow characters to follow Tom's lead and throw off the oppressive yoke of narrative that shapes their lives. But despite the joke, the Marxist view of things, and of ideology in particular, is very close to what is being said at the core of *The Purple Rose of Cairo*. Films are our peculiar form of illusion, and what they obscure from our view is the truth of what we live. From an accomplished comedian and filmmaker, this is a rather startling claim.

Yet it is evidently only half the message, and that is what's intriguing in Allen's vision. Illusions, it seems, are never just illusions. More accurately, the romantic comedies that Cecelia adores are never

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

simply diversions from her real situation and desires. They also manage to tell her something true about herself, and that is why they can grip her so hard in the first place. In the realm of the imaginary, *The Purple Rose of Cairo* suggests, things are never exclusively true or false.

The "true" or "real" that lies buried in the unreal is displayed throughout *The Purple Rose of Cairo* in the painful contrasts between Cecelia's grim circumstances and the happiness she discovers in the movie theater. But it is also the theme of Tom Baxter's first encounter with a "real" person other than Cecelia: a prostitute who happens upon Tom in his hiding place (appropriately enough, in the local amusement park). Quite innocently, Tom is led to a whorehouse where, much to his dismay, he learns what prostitution is about. He is dismayed not so much by the idea of buying (or selling) sex as he is by what such an act would mean in terms of his feelings for Cecelia. His eloquent (and intensely romantic) defense of romantic love at first amuses the whores who have gathered about him. But in the end they are genuinely moved by his sincerity and naiveté, enough to begin confessing to their own secret longings for romantic love and even children.

The point this scene makes is not that Tom's vision of love is real, and that the prostitutes' cynicism and pain are false. Tom, after all, knows only what the script of romantic comedy tells him the world is like. He represents the classical fantasy of romantic attachment that stalks about in everyone's life and permanently eludes us precisely because it is so unreal. And yet, at the same time, Tom's starry view of things is able to resurrect desires and longings the everyday world has forced underground. It is thus not simply the case that films touch upon the "real" in spite of the illusions they project. They are somehow real in the very substance and moment of those illusions.

This more complex but interesting state of affairs is both confirmed and clarified in the wider logic of the story. The world's desperation to get Tom Baxter back into the movie he has abandoned clearly suggests that traditional narratives (and their traditional separation between the imaginary and the real) are a conservative force in collective life. But it must also be the case that they are more than this. Tom Baxter, after all, makes up his own mind to leave the perfect fictional for the imperfect actual. By implication, there is something inherently unstable about such stories, quite apart from what the Raoul Hirsches of the world intend for them. Even as it is distant and delusional, the imaginary world that is nightly offered up to Cecelia is also subversive, capable of suddenly casting aside its mystifying function and becoming a sketch of a different way of life.

The creation of illusions is thus an uncertain business. The image-maker, to borrow and transform another image from Marx, is a bit like the sorcerer's apprentice, conjuring up powers he cannot contain. It is true that night after night Cecelia constructs in the dark a fantasy life she will never have in fact, thus wasting, in a sense, her will and resistance. But suddenly Tom Baxter walks out of the screen and she begins to believe that things might be different. In that case, Cecelia's fantasy life cannot be all waste and symbolic diversion. It is built around, evokes, and nourishes real and potent desires that might suddenly spring to life and demand to be satisfied. That is the problem with the production of illusions. They must touch on the real and then suppress it. For the same reason, a future in which Cecelia's desires are realized must be a future she has at one time envisioned. There may be no mystification without the imaginary, but neither is there anything else, including the freedom that she so fervently desires.

Alas for Cecelia, the imaginary is not evenly divided between liberating and illusionary impulses. As the rather somber conclusion of the film makes clear, her vision of something else—something beyond and better than Monk, the Depression, and her poverty—is fatally skewed. The "real" Tom Baxter, that is, the actor Gil Shepard, also falls in love with Cecelia. Over Tom's perfect love and pained objections, he convinces her to let go of the fictional character for the real human being. She agrees, and in her turn convinces Tom to reenter the movie and thus set the world right again. Cecelia goes home to pack her things. "I've got a chance to change my life," she tells Monk; "I'm going to Hollywood." Monk pleads and rages. "You'll be back," he warns her. "This isn't the movies, this is real life."

Of course he is right. Gil Shepard, she learns at the movie theater, has left without her. He was acting after all, playing to Cecelia's fantasies in order to get Tom Baxter back into the imaginary world. On the very edge of her freedom, Cecelia is thus betrayed by her own imagination, or more precisely by an imagination shaped by the movies.

So in the end it is the illusory force of films that appears to have the upper hand. More exactly, the ideological function of films that *The Purple Rose*

(Continued on the Third Cover)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Joshua Rubenstein

A Tormented Career

ILYA EHRENBURG: WRITING, POLITICS, AND THE ART OF SURVIVAL, by Anatol Goldberg. With an introduction, postscript, and additional material by Erik de Mauny. New York: Viking. 312 pp. $17.95.

This biography of Ilya Ehrenburg is the first serious attempt to assess the career of one of the most controversial men of our century. A writer and journalist by profession, Ehrenburg was widely regarded during the Stalin years as Russia's most effective spokesperson in the West, a talented "house Jew," whose evident success and freedom to travel helped camouflage the regime's repression and anti-Semitism. But there was more to Ehrenburg's career than his usefulness to Stalin. Anatol Goldberg has examined Ehrenburg's life through the many volumes of prose and the hundreds of articles he wrote for the Soviet press and the emigré press in Paris and Berlin. His findings, whether they prove to enhance or diminish Ehrenburg's reputation, confirm the difficulty of reaching a definitive judgment of his personality and career.

Born in Kiev in 1891 to a middle-class Jewish family, Ehrenburg grew up in Moscow where he joined an underground Bolshevik organization in high school. He was arrested and held for several months in solitary confinement. After his release, Ehrenburg fled Czarist Russia, arriving in Paris in December 1908.

AS GOLDBERG MAKES CLEAR, Paris and art seduced Ehrenburg away from revolutionary politics. Within a few months, he was abusing Lenin and other Marxists in satirical journals. Goldberg mentions this episode, but he does not realize how angry Lenin was with Ehrenburg. Yet only then, as Goldberg relates, did Ehrenburg go to Vienna to work with Leon Trotsky. It was Ehrenburg's last attempt to find engaging work as a revolutionary and it did not succeed. He returned to France, abandoned politics, and threw himself into the life of bohemian Paris. He was then 18 years old.

The next seven years were the freest of Ehrenburg's life. He fathered a daughter out of wedlock. He spent his time writing poetry and sitting in Paris cafés where he befriended Picasso, Léger, Modigliani, and Rivera. His poems reflected his longings and confusions—about Russia, Zionism, Catholicism. During World War I he became a journalist, covering the Western front for a Petersburg financial paper. Goldberg pauses over these wartime articles, for they reveal a mature and sensitive writer and deserve to be remembered among the many eloquent testimonies to the carnage of the First World War.

Ehrenburg returned to Russia after the fall of the Czar in 1917. He stayed for four years, wandering from Moscow to Kiev, to the Crimea, and to Georgia. He was accepted as a poet, met Pasternak, Mayakovsky, and Mandelstam. He married a distant cousin, Lyuba Kozintseva. But the ravages of the Civil War disturbed him. One of his cousins was pulled off a train and killed by Cossacks who guessed he was a Jew. Ehrenburg, too, was often threatened on White territory, and while in Communist Moscow he was detained by the secret police for a few days. He grew increasingly wary of the Bolsheviks. He had welcomed the fall of the Czar, but his years in Paris had made it hard for him to accept the authoritarian mood of the revolution. After much effort he returned to Western Europe in the spring of 1921, bearing one of the first Soviet passports.

Ehrenburg intended to resume his life in Paris,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but he was denounced as a Bolshevik agent and deported to Belgium. He wrote his first novel there, *The Adventures of Julio Jurenito and His Disciples*. He then settled in Berlin and became a central figure in the growing Russian emigré community of writers and intellectuals. It was a strange, twilight period of tolerance and mutual respect. Such visitors to Berlin as Pasternak, Mayakovsky, and Esenin mingled with emigrés who would never consider returning. They read and published their verse together, holding back for a few years the still-yawning split in Russian literature between writers who live in the West and those who remain in the Soviet Union.

Ehrenburg became a popular and prolific writer. He wrote 19 books between 1922 and 1931, most of them novels; almost all were published in the Soviet Union and translated into several languages. *Julio Jurenito* carried a preface by his high-school friend Nikolai Bukharin, who was now editor of *Pravda*. But though Ehrenburg's books were widely read in the Soviet Union, he was criticized for their misgivings about Soviet life. Extreme critics called him a "petty bourgeois" and a "pornographer."

Goldberg's account of this period is especially sensitive and well-informed. *Julio Jurenito*, *The Life and Death of Nikolai Kurbov*, and *The Stormy Life of Lazik Roitschwantz* are first-rate novels, and Goldberg's discussion of them, particularly his analysis of *Julio Jurenito*, is long overdue. Ehrenburg's early novels combined a fierce irony with extravagant inventiveness. In *Julio Jurenito*, a story of Mephistopheles and his disciples, Ehrenburg foresees the destruction of European Jewry. In *Nikolai Kurbov*, he explores the morality of a Bolshevik. In *Lazik Roitschwantz* (which has never appeared in the Soviet Union), he tells the story of a well-meaning Jewish Candide from Gomel who dies starving on Rachel's Tomb.

As the 1920s drew to a close, Ehrenburg could not sustain his independence as a writer. He had maintained his ties to Russia, visiting on occasion and keeping his Soviet passport. But as the country's borders tightened and Stalin exerted greater ideological control, it became impossible for Ehrenburg to remain a Soviet writer, with access to his primary audience, and still live in the West on his own terms. As Goldberg defines the dilemma, "Either he must accept the regime, or become relegated to the status of an emigré."

EHRENBURG KNEW that accepting the regime meant losing his freedom. But he did not do it cynically or with blind illusions. There was an element of faintheartedness on his part, a resolve not to risk living like other emigré writers whose hatred of the regime left them poor and isolated in Paris. But as Goldberg's close analysis reveals, Ehrenburg felt compelled by several factors, including his own ideological ambivalence, to attach himself to a cause. His enthusiasms had always been unstable, shifting from politics to art, to religion and mysticism, from one style of literature to another. Russia offered a faith and a utopian future. In his memoirs, Ehrenburg claimed that he "could not find himself" until the age of 40 (in 1931). He explained further that the "fate of a soldier is not the fate of a dreamer, and that one had to take one's place in the fighting ranks. I did not renounce what I held dear nor did I repudiate anything, but I knew I would have to live with clenched teeth and learn one of the most difficult sciences—silence."

In 1932, Ehrenburg became *Izvestia* correspondent in Paris. He could not foresee the grotesque horrors of Stalinism or that many of his beloved friends would perish within six years. By then, he had become too closely identified with the regime and too deeply involved in the struggle against fascism to turn back.

Ilya Ehrenburg became more than a prominent journalist. His numerous contacts among European intellectuals made him a unique and valuable advocate of Soviet interests. He brought André Malraux to Moscow in 1934 for the First Soviet Writers' Congress. The following year he was among the principal organizers of the International Writers' Congress for the Defense of Culture. It was his first political assignment and it brought him to the attention of Stalin. He ably deflected embarrassing questions about the writer Victor Serge, who was then under arrest in Moscow, and kept the meeting focused on Nazi Germany and its outrages.

With the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Ehrenburg hurried to Madrid. Again, he did more than cover the war as a journalist. He arranged a propaganda team for the International Brigades and served as a liaison between the Soviet Consulate in Barcelona and the anarchists of Catalonia, and he came to know Hemingway and Dos Passos.

The Great Purge coincided almost exactly with the Spanish Civil War. Ehrenburg, Goldberg asserts, used Spain as a "kind of refuge," a means to stay away from Moscow and immerse himself in a cause he truly supported. On his own initiative, however, Ehrenburg and his wife returned to Moscow in December 1937.

Ehrenburg, in his memoirs, described his first days in Moscow. A sign in the elevator warned, "It is forbidden to flush books down the toilet." Isaac

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Babel told him, "A man talks candidly only with his wife—at night, with the sheet over their heads." At Stalin's behest, he received a ticket to attend a session of Bukharin's trial, the climax of the Great Purge. He could only return home, horrified, and lie on the sofa with his face to the wall.

Ehrenburg then made a fateful decision. He and his wife still had no travel visas so he wrote to Stalin, claiming that his place was in Spain where he could be most useful. He was told to wait. But Ehrenburg refused to be patient and against the wishes of his family he appealed to Stalin again; this time they were permitted to leave.

The Spanish drama lasted another year. By its close Ehrenburg was back in France. Stalin's policy was shifting in the spring of 1939. Ehrenburg's outspoken antifascism became a liability and his articles ceased to appear in the Soviet press. He learned about the Stalin–Hitler pact in Paris. Almost immediately, he fell ill; he could not swallow solid food and lost 50 pounds in eight months. He was near suicide.

It is not clear from Goldberg's account of these events just how precarious Ehrenburg's position became. While he did not publicly denounce the pact, his prolonged stay in Paris was correctly understood in Moscow as a protest. He preferred to remain in France, which was at war with Germany, than return to Russia, which was now Hitler's ally. In the spring of 1940 the writer Valentin Katayev successfully appealed to the Literary Fund of the Writers' Union, asking for possession of Ehrenburg's *dacha* because he was not returning to Moscow. (Katayev still lives in this *dacha*.)

According to the linguist Roman Jakobson, who saw Ehrenburg in Paris, and Henry Shapiro, the dean of American correspondents in Moscow, Ehrenburg seriously considered going to Palestine. Like his hero Lazik Roitschwantz, he was running out of places to live. But he knew there would be war and he could not abandon his daughter who was living in Moscow. After witnessing the occupation of Paris in June and July 1940, he returned to Moscow by train across Germany.

Almost immediately, Ehrenburg began to write about his experiences. As Goldberg remarks, Ehrenburg "had seen and heard things which no other Soviet writer had seen or heard, and he was determined to tell as much as he could." The Soviet press branded England and France as the aggressors in a "second imperialist war." Only Ehrenburg's articles on the occupation of Paris ran counter to the general political line. They were a warning that the Nazis not be mistaken for the civilized Germans Russia had faced a generation

Nadezhda Mandelstam Writes to Ilya Ehrenburg

Nadezhda Mandelstam first met Ilya Ehrenburg in 1918 when he came to Kiev during the Civil War that followed the Revolution. She was a student of art and a close friend of Lyuba Kozintseva who married Ehrenburg in 1919. After Osip Mandelstam's arrest and death in the 1930s, Nadezhda Mandelstam survived the remainder of the Stalin period in the provinces, moving from town to town, and dedicating her life to preserving the poetry and memory of her husband. She would visit Moscow occasionally in the final years of Stalin's life; Ehrenburg's home was one of the few always open to her, and he helped secure permission for her to live in Moscow once Stalin was dead.

In 1963, when Nikita Khrushchev publicly denounced Ehrenburg for portions of People, Years, Life, *Nadezhda Mandelstam wrote him a letter of support. As her memoirs,* Hope Against Hope *and* Hope Abandoned, *reveal, she was a merciless, unsparing critic of Stalinism and all writers and intellectuals who cooperated with the regime at the expense of their colleagues. Her letter to Ehrenburg must be taken into account when evaluating his career. It is published here for the first time.* — J. R.

Dear Ilya Grigorevich!

I have been thinking about you a good deal (when friends think about someone he doesn't have any pain), and this is what I have finally understood.

From the point of view of everyday life it is hard to live in the epicenter of an earthquake. But in a certain sense this is important and necessary. You know there is a tendency to accuse you of not reversing the direction of rivers, of not changing the course of the stars, of not breaking up the moon into honeycake and feeding us the pieces. In other words, people always wanted the impossible from you and were angry when you did the possible.

Now, after the latest events, it is obvious how much you did and are doing to relax our usual ways, how great your role is in our life and how we should be grateful to you. *Everyone* understands this now. And I am happy to tell you this and to shake your hand.

I kiss you affectionately and want you to be strong as always.

Your Nadya

Regards to Lyuba.

— *Translated by* Joshua Rubenstein □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

before. He expanded his account into the novel *The Fall of Paris*. As the narrative drew closer to 1940, Ehrenburg had increasing difficulty with the censors. But then he was instructed to call Stalin who assured him he could write as he pleased. It was their only conversation; Ehrenburg understood that war with Germany was imminent.

Ehrenburg's role in World War II is still the most widely recalled chapter of his career in the Soviet Union. But it is also among the most unexpected and hardest to explain. He had just turned 50, he was a Jew, he had lived virtually his entire adult life in the West, and he was primarily a novelist and an intellectual. Yet he became the country's most important journalist. His columns in the army paper *Red Star* were devoured by ordinary soldiers. They were read to the troops before battle and discussed throughout the country. There was even a military order that Ehrenburg's articles had to be clipped from *Red Star* before the paper could be used for rolling cigarettes.

There were several reasons for Ehrenburg's unique stature. First, he was more candid than other journalists and often challenged the censorship, which tried to mask the extent of Soviet losses at the outset of the war. Second, his articles contained fewer references to Stalin and so, to that degree, were not mere exercises in propaganda. And third, Ehrenburg's articles were the most viciously anti-German (and not simply anti-Nazi) in the Soviet press. The writer Lev Kopelev, who served as a front-line officer, told Ehrenburg during the war that his articles made it harder for Germans to surrender because, knowing of Ehrenburg's hatred for them and popularity among Soviet troops, Germans feared they would be shot outright.

While Goldberg's analysis of Ehrenburg's wartime contribution is useful, he fails adequately to assess Ehrenburg's resurgent identity as a Jew. Ehrenburg was a sincere assimilationist, but he deplored anti-Semitism, and even under Stalin and especially later under Khrushchev found means to denounce it.

Within weeks after the German invasion, the Kremlin organized the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. It was designed primarily to encourage Western Jewish communities to support the Soviet war effort. Ehrenburg was a prominent member of the committee. His own position and prestige gave him access to information on the Holocaust and on Jewish partisan resistance. One of his personal projects during the war was documenting the mass murder of Jews in occupied Soviet territory. Goldberg writes very little about this, but my own interviews with several former Jewish partisans who talked with Ehrenburg in Moscow and later settled in Israel and the United States confirm that Ehrenburg was profoundly shaken by the Holocaust and deeply embittered by the anti-Semitism that Stalin promoted during and after the war.

In his memoirs, Ehrenburg referred to the final years before Stalin's death "as perhaps the most difficult of my life." In January 1948, his friend the Yiddish actor Solomon Mikhoels was killed under mysterious circumstances. By the end of the year, Stalin began his purge of Jewish culture, arresting, then executing the leading Yiddish writers and closing the few remaining Jewish cultural institutions. Ehrenburg expected arrest and there were rumors in Moscow that he had been detained. On his trips abroad, he was asked about the Yiddish poets. Goldberg himself was present at a London press conference in 1950 when Ehrenburg lied about their fate. But when Stalin wanted him to endorse rounding up the country's Jews, Ehrenburg refused. It happened this way:

The doorbell rang past midnight in early February 1953; Ehrenburg and his wife were asleep. The ring startled them and, as often happened at moments of frightening tension, Mme. Ehrenburg temporarily lost the use of her legs and could not move. He had to open the door. It was not the police, as they both feared.

Their visitor was Isaac Mintz, a historian and a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. He carried a petition to Stalin concerning the "doctors' plot" which was to appear in *Pravda* and be signed by prominent Jews. Just weeks before, on January 13, the Soviet press had announced that a group of Kremlin doctors, most of them Jews, had been charged with conspiring to murder Soviet political leaders. Mintz wanted Ehrenburg to sign the appeal to save Soviet Jews "from the wrath of the people" by sending them from the large cities of European Russia, where most of them lived, to Central Asia and Birobidjan, along the Chinese border.

Ehrenburg had flatly refused to sign when Mintz first approached him a few days before. But his late-night visit made clear to Ehrenburg that Mintz had been sent by the Kremlin. Once again, however, Ehrenburg did not sign and asked to express his misgivings in a letter to Stalin. As the two men talked, Mme. Ehrenburg joined them and stayed with Mintz while her husband withdrew to his study.

Years later Lyuba Ehrenburg described to a family friend how Mintz tried to frighten her. He warned her that she, too, would be arrested if

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ehrenburg would not sign and that once in jail no one could be sure of their fate. Ehrenburg, meanwhile, tried to think how to deter Stalin from such a monstrous plan.

Anatol Goldberg provides the text of Ehrenburg's letter to Stalin in the appendix of this biography. The letter is a clever political gambit. Ehrenburg mentioned his own involvement in the Struggle for Peace, a Soviet-inspired campaign to restrain development of nuclear arms in the West. The "peace movement" was a major factor in the appeal of Western Communist parties, so he emphasized that such an action would disrupt the European Communist movement. Ehrenburg stated his sincere belief in assimilation as the "only radical solution to the Jewish Question in our Socialist state," but he feared that a petition signed by "people . . . whose only common link is their origin may strengthen nationalistic tendencies."

He gave his letter to Mintz. A week later, Ehrenburg was summoned late at night to *Pravda*. A leading editor told him that he did not want to send his letter to the Kremlin because "he could not predict what the consequences would be." He urged Ehrenburg to reconsider. Ehrenburg asked if Stalin already knew about the collective appeal circulated by Mintz. He was then shown a corrected copy of the petition; it had Stalin's familiar blue pencil markings. But Ehrenburg was not intimidated. He again refused to sign and insisted that his own letter be sent to Stalin. When Ehrenburg arrived home, several friends and relatives were waiting for him. One remembers that he looked "pale, beaten, and terrified," as she had never seen him before.

Ehrenburg's letter to Stalin has long been known to exist, and Anatol Goldberg does a service to history by providing the text. But his account of the episode is marred by factual errors. Ehrenburg was not the only person who refused to sign, as Goldberg claims. The esteemed novelist Veniamin Kaverin also refused, as did the poet Evgeny Dolmatovsky who insisted he was so assimilated that it made no sense for him to join an "appeal by Jews." (The letter is also mistakenly dated "1949" in the biography.) Stalin's death on March 5, 1953 aborted the plot, but on the eve of his demise, Jewish cultural figures were still being summoned to affix their names to the collective appeal. Had Stalin survived, it is hard to know what would have happened.

THE KHRUSHCHEV PERIOD COINCIDED almost exactly with the final years of Ehrenburg's life. He played a major role, pressing for greater freedom of expression and contact with the West. His novel *The Thaw*, his essays on Chekhov and Stendhal, the Picasso exhibit he promoted, his speeches on Tsvetaeva, Meyerhold, Babel, and Mandelstam were all major events in the drama of de-Stalinization.

His memoirs, *People, Years, Life*, began appearing in August 1960 in the liberal journal *Novy Mir*. Ehrenburg was able to publish six sections in serial form, more than 1,200 pages, over the next five years. He struggled continuously with the censors and sometimes with the Central Committee when his insistence on raising sensitive issues forced a decision by high government officials. He wrote about his friendship with Bukharin—forbidden. He wrote two chapters on *The Black Book*, the volume he and Vasily Grossman edited about the Holocaust; the chapters were removed. But Ehrenburg did manage to include unmistakable references to Bukharin in the *Novy Mir* version. Several years later, when the memoirs appeared in his *Selected Works*, he was permitted to refer more directly to Bukharin and to include the original text about *The Black Book*.

People, Years, Life restored a significant part of history to the Russian people. Ehrenburg was the first to write about many of Stalin's victims, to make clear how they were killed and by whom. He wrote about life in Europe before the Soviet borders were closed. He described the influence of the Russian avant-garde on the evolution of 20th-century art.

Ehrenburg was criticized for "resurrecting corpses." Khrushchev himself attacked the memoirs, denouncing Ehrenburg for not accepting the Revolution, and most of all for claiming that he had to remain silent out of fear when he knew innocent people were perishing under Stalin. "People who were more influential and better informed than I could not stop the crimes," Ehrenburg had concluded. He was dealing with the most explosive issue in Soviet society, for his admission implicated all the top leaders under Stalin, including Khrushchev, who was now in charge. The regime could not forgive him. Publication of the memoirs almost came to a halt and he was not permitted to travel for nearly a year.

Goldberg provides many useful insights and hitherto unknown information about *People, Years, Life*. But his chapters on the Khrushchev period fail to convey the full drama of Ehrenburg's final years. He was not only consumed with challenging official censorship. He was also ill with cancer and deeply in love with Liselotte Meer, the wife of the mayor of Stockholm, whom he had met on one of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his frequent trips abroad. This love may well have provided the emotional stamina he needed to challenge Soviet censorship as he did.

ANATOL GOLDBERG IS WELL-SUITED to examine Ehrenburg's life. Born in St. Petersburg in 1910, he left Russia after the Revolution and later became the leading figure on the BBC Russian service. He was well-known to a generation of Soviet citizens for his reasoned, slightly ironic commentaries on Soviet life. But Goldberg died in March 1982, having completed only a first draft of this book. His friend, the journalist Erik de Mauny, prepared the manuscript for publication. Their work reflects Goldberg's reputation for balanced and well-informed reporting.

For Ilya Ehrenburg's career resists an easy judgment. There were too many compromises to make him a genuine hero and too many acts of defiant courage to dismiss him as nothing more than an opportunist. The regime, as well, can only acknowledge parts of his career. Several of his novels were banned while he was alive, the memoirs cannot be reissued, his identity as a Jew is ignored. During the controversy over *People, Years, Life*, an adviser to Khrushchev complained that "Ehrenburg has changed. He is not the patriot we knew during the war."

After his death in 1967, an enormous crowd gathered outside the House of Writers for his funeral. Nadezhda Mandelstam attended. She noted in *Hope Abandoned* "that the faces were decent and human ones. It was an anti-Fascist crowd, and the police spies who had been sent to the funeral in force stood out very conspicuously. It was clear, in other words, that Ehrenburg had done his work well, difficult and thankless though it was." □

To Letter Writers

- *We welcome succinct letters from our readers. But because we have a long "lead time" for each issue, you have to send us your letter within three weeks after getting an issue of* Dissent *in order to get it into the next issue. So if you want to write about something that you like, or dislike, in or about* Dissent, *please do it quickly.*

- *Letters must be kept to about 500 words, typed, double-spaced, and carry the full address and name of the sender. We reserve the right to edit letters down to fit our space and to choose which shall be printed. Letters will not be returned to senders unless they are accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes.* □

Fred Block

Economy and Nostalgia

THE SECOND INDUSTRIAL DIVIDE: POSSIBILITIES FOR PROSPERITY, by Michael J. Piore and Charles F. Sabel. New York: Basic Books. 355 pp. $21.95.

Michael Piore and Charles Sabel have written a book that is both enormously insightful and deeply irritating. These two qualities are so tightly intertwined that it is not a question of directing readers to the good parts and warning them against the bad; there is no alternative but to take the bitter and the sweet together.

The sweet part is that Piore and Sabel make a radical and constructive break with the premises that have ruled most recent debates on economic and industrial policy. They reject the widespread view that there is a fundamental conflict between the logic of capital accumulation and the pursuit of social welfare. In company with other recent analysts (see particularly Robert Kuttner, *The Economic Illusion: False Choices between Prosperity and Social Justice*, Houghton Mifflin, 1984), they provide data showing the absolute lack of correlation between recent economic performance and levels of social spending among developed capitalist countries.

To press this critique of the conventional wisdom, they elaborate a new conceptual framework. They wisely view concepts such as "capitalist society" or the "capitalist organization of the labor process" as hopelessly underspecified. So they propose an intermediate level of analysis—the existence of different regimes of regulation in the economy and in the workplace. They demonstrate in detail the existence of significant differences over time and across countries in patterns of microeconomic and macroeconomic regulation and in techniques of organizing the shop floor. The particular modes of regulation that they identify do not emerge automatically; they are constructed out of political conflicts, but once created, they take on a life of their own. This focus on modes of regulation leads to the insight that these institutional factors are critical determinants of economic prosperity. For example, the success or failure of a mode of shop-floor regulation can be far more consequential than the factors that economists usu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ally examine, such as variations in the average wage.

While Piore and Sabel are not the first to develop these kinds of intermediate concepts, they make a persuasive case by demonstrating the leverage such concepts provide in understanding some of the key areas of difference among the major capitalist countries. Moreover, they use this conceptual framework to show that the crisis of the American economy is best understood not as a general crisis of capitalism but as a specific crisis of the modes of regulation that have dominated American society since the 1940s. In particular, they see the system of mass production and the mechanisms of macroregulation coming into crisis as global industrial capacity for mass-produced goods outstrips demand. At the same time, they argue that the unique American system of workplace regulation that evolved with mass production has reached its limits. The key features of this workplace regime are jobs that are narrowly defined as aggregates of well-specified tasks, a seniority system for distributing those jobs, and an elaborate grievance mechanism that emphasizes procedures over substantive dispute resolution.

The critique of this mode of shop-floor organization is the core of the book. Piore and Sabel are arguing that this workplace regime is rigid and wasteful and interferes with the capacity of the American economy to compete in the production of destandardized goods. Their solution is a form of shop-floor organization they call "flexible specialization," and they associate it with the craft tradition in which worker skill levels and responsibility are broadened and a framework of labor management cooperation facilitates substantive dispute resolution.

In posing this alternative, Piore and Sabel are determined to avoid slipping into forms of economic or technological determinism. Hence they emphasize that it would take significant kinds of cultural and political realignments to create new regulatory systems that are built around "flexible specialization." In this way they distance themselves from those corporate reformers who see the creation of more flexible organizations as a "quick fix" for the problems of the economy.

In short, Piore and Sabel put the *political* back into political economy through their determined rejection of arguments based on false necessity—the insistence that things must be a certain way because of "economic logic." Rather, they demonstrate that economies always operate within systems of regulation so that questions of political choice are fundamental.

ALL THIS WOULD BE EVEN MORE VALUABLE were Piore and Sabel able to provide a satisfactory outline of an alternative regulatory scheme. While it is unreasonable to expect a full blueprint, a study that is committed to broadening the sphere of political choice has an obligation to go beyond the general slogan of "flexible specialization." Yet the authors' limited effort to be more specific ends up disappointingly.

Piore and Sabel devote a page and a half to "The Macroeconomics of Flexible Specialization" in which they discuss the kinds of macroeconomic mechanisms that would be needed to make a system of flexible specialization work. Here the reader, after wading through pages of sophisticated critiques of standard economic assumptions, is surprised to learn that "A shift away from mass production would restore the neoclassical equilibrating mechanisms that (to the extent that they have functioned at all) were probably most prominent in the early-nineteenth-century American economy." A little bit later we are told that "it would be possible to maintain full employment largely through monetary policy, without resorting to wage-determination systems linking purchasing power to the rate of increase of productive capacity, the automatic stabilizing features of the welfare state, and discretionary fiscal policy." The authors seem to be arguing that flexible specialization makes possible a return to laissez-faire in macroeconomic policy.

It is here that the reader begins to sense a bitter aftertaste. That Piore and Sabel can end up with this unpersuasive argument suggests that their continual focus on the choice between mass production and flexible specialization is too constraining. Three problems with their line of argument are particularly serious.

- First, throughout the book, Piore and Sabel seem to imply that manufacturing is the only thing going on in the economy. It is as if they were writing in 1940 and nobody had yet pointed out that a dramatic shift toward services is taking place. At one point they even point to an economic mystery—"why new industries did not emerge to replace the automobile and household-durables industries when the markets for these products in the advanced capitalist countries became saturated." Since the authors must be aware of the growth of the entertainment, health care, and the fast-food industries, it is as if they take only goods production seriously. Hence their confident prediction that a regime of flexible specialization at the industrial workplace will restore full employment ap-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pears to be written without taking seriously the sharp declines in manufacturing employment as a percentage of total employment.

In a number of places where they describe functioning industrial districts that are based on flexible specialization, they acknowledge the critical role of government in facilitating and organizing research, training, transportation, and communication. Yet they never acknowledge that these are service activities and that the industrial transformation that they describe makes services ever more central to economic development. This neglect of services means that Piore and Sabel are blocked from adequately conceptualizing the new economy that they advocate.

• Second, Piore and Sabel's treatment of technology is highly problematic. They begin the book with the claim that the triumph of mass production over craft production in the 19th century was not inevitable, and that craft production could have been as technologically dynamic as the path that was taken. This is a provocative thesis, but an adequate defense of it would require a confrontation with Marx's classic argument that the capitalist organization of production was historically necessary to develop the productive forces. This the authors never do; they also fail to confront the reality of technological conservatism within artisanal modes of work organization.

To make matters worse, Piore and Sabel seem determined to argue that, at present, the growing importance of flexible specialization cannot be explained by technological developments. Yet virtually all their current examples of flexible specialization rest on a new technology that makes possible economies of scale despite small-batch production. Part of the problem here is that Piore and Sabel are continually arguing against pure forms of technological determinism that see the computer as inevitably producing certain consequences. Yet this is not what the debate now is about.

The most sophisticated current view, as advanced by Larry Hirschhorn in *Beyond Mechanization* (MIT Press, 1984), sees a real historical discontinuity in the development of production technology between mechanical and cybernetic forms. The elaboration of cybernetic technologies with their systems of control and feedback facilitates more flexible production and the upgrading of worker skill levels. However, Hirschhorn insists that it is not inevitable that the possibilities inherent in technological development will actually be realized—and that the uses of technology depend on a multitude of political, economic, and cultural variables. This attempt to periodize the history of technological development is far more satisfying than Piore and Sabel's claim that the early 19th-century Jacquard loom and the numerically controlled machine tool are basically the same.

The latter point is also relevant to the macroeconomics of the argument, since Piore and Sabel demonstrate no understanding of the fact that the cybernetic technologies used in contemporary settings of flexible specialization radically reduce industrial employment. By constantly linking today's new craft workers with those of the 19th century, the authors obscure the significant differences in numbers between the two populations. As we have seen, this confusion culminates in the claim that the shift to flexible specialization will magically restore full employment.

• The final difficulty is closely related to these problems; Piore and Sabel are never specific enough about what they mean by flexible specialization. The purest case is clearly the Italian high-tech cottage industry that Sabel popularized in his valuable first book, *Work and Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1982). Here the category is extended to include the use of more flexible forms of work organization within large factories. But the boundary lines or the criteria for what to count as flexible specialization are never clearly established. At worst, the category becomes something that extends, from traditional artisanal skills, all the way to relatively limited experiments in job enlargement. This lack of specificity threatens to make the concept meaningless.

When confronted with this peculiar combination of insight and myopia, one has to wonder about its sources. One possible answer is that much contemporary economic analysis—both on the right and on the left—is written from a standpoint of nostalgia for the world of mass-production workers. Since mass production is the economic model that has worked most recently, it serves either consciously or unconsciously to constrain our sense of options and choices in responding to the present crisis. Like generals who are always fighting the last war, political economists are always solving the problems of the previous period's models of economic organization.

YET PIORE AND SABEL HAVE SUCCEEDED brilliantly in ridding themselves of this nostalgia. Their insights come from the recognition that the world of the mass-production worker has passed, and that we urgently need new forms of social and economic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

organization. But the problem is that Piore and Sabel have rushed into the breach with a different nostalgia; they are able to look unblinkingly at the recent past only by romanticizing the long-departed world of the craft worker.* And this nostalgia for a more distant past has the effect of clouding their vision about some of the most important dimensions of the present.

Nostalgia is bittersweet, but it is also a luxury that we can ill afford in the present context. Without it, Piore and Sabel might have been able to extend their analytic insights into a volume that persuasively explored new "possibilities for prosperity."

---

* Barbara Ehrenreich has suggested that the nostalgia for the world of the mass-production worker is linked to assumptions about traditional family life. "Thus if we could just figure out how to revive well-paying male jobs then there will be 'trickle down to women and children too,' because women will have the sense to marry these men with the well-paying jobs. . . . " From "Full Employment for Whom?" (*Socialist Review*, May–August 1984.) Obviously, this critique is equally relevant to nostalgia for the world of craft workers. □

Zuzana Kohákova

Normalization: The Human Reality

THE RESTORATION OF ORDER: THE NORMALIZATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1969–1976, by Milan Šimečka. Translated from the Czech by A. G. Brain. London:Verso. 167 pp. $22.50.

By now there is a large literature available in English on the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia and its aftermath. Nevertheless, Milan Šimečka's *The Restoration of Order*, written eight years ago and circulated by Czechoslovakia's Samizdat, has only recently been translated into English and is a valuable addition.

The book is unique in its insistence upon preserving the concrete human reality behind the antiseptic concept of "normalization." Šimečka is candid about his reasons for choosing this approach: in part, his demotion from professor to manual worker left him no access to and little patience with the statistics that are the meat of "positive" histories. The accident of his personal fate freed him to pursue the goal of understanding history as an experience fashioned and suffered by human beings who are resistant to abstract laws and not the product of objective forces. The result illuminates for the Westerner much that is puzzling about present conditions in Czechoslovakia.

THE WORD "NORMALIZATION" contains the crux of the matter: the perception prevailing in the Kremlin, *not* shared by the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist party, that the development that peaked in 1968 represented an abnormal (that is, undesirable) state of affairs. Šimečka asks: Abnormal in contrast to what? What exactly constituted the "normal," to which the Kremlin and the post-1969 regime sought to return?

The question revives a memory from 1939: Šimečka, then a nine-year old boy, stands on the street, watching German troops move into town. His older sister, crying in the background, is admonished by an uncle: "Don't cry, silly girl; at least we'll have some order now." After the Soviet invasion, Šimečka again heard this peculiar apologia, repeated by government officials who "stated with all due manly authority that it was high time things were put in order." This bit of historical repetition provides Šimečka with his theme: "normalization" can be decoded as "the restoration of order." In a succession of compactly knit chapters, elegantly written, Šimečka examines the way in which "order" was restored in Czechoslovak life.

THIS EXPEDIENT NEW "ORDER" appeared in 1969, with the elevation of Gustav Husak, who had always envisioned personal power as the main point of politics, to the post of first secretary of the Central Committee. The nature of the new order was articulated the next year when the party conducted mass screenings of its rank-and-file membership and expelled some 70,000 "undesirables." The screenings were designed to elevate a particular type of character.

The party claimed as its own those who had never bothered to think much about any issue—those who had let the political wind blow them where it would and had never taken an initiative, reacted spontaneously, or been too scrupulous about minor ethical considerations. These were the people who had doggedly defended the current

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

status quo, whatever it happened to be. The party feared and found suspect any spark of individuality or independent thought, and this fear extended to ludicrous lengths:

> [The party] rejects most categorically: singularity, independence of mind, generosity, tolerance, excessive education, high moral principles, aversion to officialese, courage. . . . But it also takes exception to a knowledge of foreign languages, a sense of humor, any hairstyle but short-back-and sides, and so on.

To prevent any such spark, the party simply wiped out contemporary Czechoslovak culture. It suspended publication of most cultural journals of the '60s, banned the works of certain authors, and blacklisted anyone prominent in the media during the Prague Spring. The tone of the media changed, in a direction reminiscent of *Candide:*

> When a plane crashes into a lake causing the deaths of seventy people in dreadful circumstances, it is described on the news as an "aircraft accident." "An official report into the causes will be issued as soon as investigations are complete." That means never. Everything is made to sound trivial and cheerful. If we were not in the know we could be forgiven for believing that a Czechoslovak Airlines plane had run over a rabbit as it came down the runway.

The party had a sophisticated understanding of individual and group psychology. It understood indeed that fear of some clearly defined threat (for instance physical violence) can stimulate effective action, whereas the terror produced by an ill-defined, unpredictable disaster tends to shut down thought and action altogether. Thus it avoided the use of overt force wherever possible, developing the bureaucratization of terror to a fine art.

The first step was what Šimečka calls "occupational persecution." Those expelled from the party were understood to harbor contagion, and thus had to be removed from sensitive positions in the media, schools and universities, clinics and research laboratories. These people were seldom fired outright, but hounded and harassed until, their confidence eroded, they agreed to resign.

The general climate of paranoia made it easy for envious, insecure persons to rid themselves of potential competitors. Occupational persecution was an effective means of quelling dissent. Since the state is the sole employer, professors, doctors, journalists demoted to sweeping floors knew that one false move would mean losing this last pitiful livelihood available to them.

For those floor sweepers, night watchmen, and cleaning women who persisted in thinking and writing, the regime upped the scale of terror with tailing, house searches, interrogations, and arrests. However, even these methods usually stop short of physical violence, being calculated to unnerve and terrorize, through the sheer unpredictability of what might come next. (What physical violence still occurs tends to be carried out in dark alleys, by anonymous assailants.) Should all else fail, the state retains one last trump card—the children. Those who continue to resist risk not only their own well-being and careers, but their children's education and future.

It is hard to estimate the cost at which "order" was restored in Czechoslovakia—in loss of productivity, cultural stagnation, spiritual emptiness. But the highest, most horrifying cost is that of demoralization.

> It is quite possible that there have been people who protested against injustice, were unwilling to declare that black was white, and risked their skins. But they aren't us. We refuse to see the situation into which we are being drawn in such clear-cut terms. In our own home-grown dictatorship there's always some way out. . . . We trade a half-truth for a half-lie. We extricate ourselves from our principles, and honor becomes a matter of private conscience.

THE BOOK'S VALIDITY, eight years after Šimečka wrote it, is astonishing. To this day organized dissent sees the nature of the new order as Šimečka described it. Charter 77, which did not exist at the time Šimečka was writing, has protested primarily the disintegration of integrity and the deadly expediency with which the regime has broken the very agreements it has signed (for instance, in Helsinki). Countercultural groups like the Plastic People rebel against the regime's attempt to stifle all individuality and spontaneity. Finally, the recent resurgence of interest in formal religion seems to be a direct response to the regime's opposition to the church.

The only point where Šimečka's analysis becomes disappointing is in the chapter "Positive Attributes," in which he describes what he sees as the accomplishments of 20 years of social change that might, if things had gone differently in 1968, have made possible the development of a third political system that would be superior to both "socialism" and capitalism. Here Šimečka falls victim to the abstractions he so successfully avoids elsewhere in the book. This is particularly true in his use of the term "capitalism," which I find neither sufficiently subtle nor complex to describe all the failings of the West. This fault, however, can hardly be held against Šimečka who had been isolated from the West for nearly 20 years when

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

writing his book, and even this chapter has its valuable insights. (The author, by the way, lives to this day in Czechoslovakia.)

Šimečka's discussion of the West makes clear that the widespread Czechoslovak rejection of Soviet colonization is not an unqualified vote of confidence for the West. The fact that those who, like Šimečka, have been bled dry at the hands of the Soviets are least likely to enthusiastically embrace the West as their model should serve as a sobering reflection. □

John Holdren

Remembering a Literary Radical

FORGOTTEN PROPHET: THE LIFE OF RANDOLPH BOURNE, by Bruce Clayton. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. 275 pp. $25.00.

To the many progressive reforms advocated in America shortly before World War I, some intellectuals could give partial sympathy but not wholehearted commitment. Radical young intellectuals, fueled by Wells, Shaw, and Whitman, calling themselves socialists and Bergsonians, and scorning all things genteel and "puritan," were impatient with the liberal tendency to define "the promise of American life" in strictly political and economic terms. These literary radicals, as the historian Henry F. May has written, "were uninterested in any plan for social improvement which was not also a program for spiritual and artistic liberation."

The names of these literary radicals are now only vaguely familiar: Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, James Oppenheim, Paul Rosenfeld, Randolph Bourne. Despite their extravagant idealism, their exaggeration of the power of artists and intellectuals to shape American life, we cannot afford to forget them. Especially in this day of a curious "new patriotism," it is good to be reminded of these literary radicals' trenchant critique of American reality and their generous vision of American possibilities. None spoke in purer tones, be they of scornful invective or rhapsodic celebration, than Randolph Bourne.

With the possible exception of Brooks, who lived to write best-selling literary histories, Bourne, who died in 1918 at the age of 32, is perhaps the best remembered among these literary radicals—in part because Bourne lives on as legend. The brilliant life cut tragically short; the alienated intellectual who could not but speak the truth as he saw it and thus found himself even more alienated; the beautiful mind and voice in the dwarfish, hunchbacked body caused by, in his words, "a terribly messy birth" and a childhood case of spinal tuberculosis: such is the dramatic stuff of the Bourne legend. The legend (while true) can tempt the sympathetic commentator to hagiography; the image of the saint or martyr may displace the ideas of the radical.

Bruce Clayton, Bourne's most recent biographer, avoids this temptation. While Clayton remains generally sympathetic, he can be stringently critical of his subject. Clayton states his purpose as "not to glorify but to understand the man and place him and his thinking in context." He succeeds, especially in his delineation of the context, the whirl of events and ideas in which Bourne moved.

While Clayton does not attempt any probing psychological analysis, he does address such troublesome issues as Bourne's deep sexual longings, confused by his Protestant middle-class upbringing, inflamed by his correspondence and friendships with women, and finally unfulfilled because of his appearance. Clayton recognizes, without condemning, the paradox of Bourne's life: he defined, practiced, and championed radicalism as a necessary detachment and resistance, even as he yearned to be an insider, "to enter life's larger room where Ellery Sedgwick, . . . Herbert Croly, Walter Lippmann, and John Dewey sat."

To gain entrance, Bourne had to overcome the obstacles presented by his deformity. The problem was not only how others saw him, but also how he saw himself. "The deformed man," he wrote in "The Handicapped," "is always conscious that the world does not expect very much from him. . . . As a result, he does not expect very much of himself." By an effort of will difficult to sustain, Bourne managed to turn these low expectations into "a challenge instead of a firm pressing down to a low level of accomplishment."

In 1903 the bright high school graduate hoped to go to Princeton. His mother could not afford it; his father, alcoholic and impecunious, had for some years been banished from the family circle by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Halsey Barrett, Randolph's well-to-do uncle. Randolph appealed to his uncle, who had supported the family since the father's departure, but Barrett refused. It was time, he felt, for Randolph to go to work. In New York, in one shop or office after another, the discouraged boy heard variations on the response: what work could there be for a person who looks like you?

In 1905 Bourne finally found work with a Bloomfield manufacturer of music rolls for player pianos. By day he plinked out popular ditties on a contraption that punched the tunes he played; by night he read. Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*, as he later recalled, inspired him with its vision of a "definitely glorious future, toward which all good men might work." The Fabian arguments of G. Lowes Dickinson's *Justice and Liberty* presented him with a Platonic dialogue in which the argument for socialism triumphs. Clayton observes that, "however vague," Bourne's incipient socialism "gave him the language and the psychological courage to break from Bloomfield and laissez-faire individualism."

THE BREAK became an impassable gap when Bourne, encouraged by friends, took the scholarship examinations at Columbia and received full tuition. Enrolling in 1910 at the age of 23, Bourne at last found the intellectual community he needed. At Columbia he began his brief and brilliant literary career, pouring forth his passionate prose in essay after essay, many of which, as Clayton observes, still deserve our attention.

We have yet, for example, fully to heed Bourne's argument in "Trans-National America" for "a cultural ideal that transcends nationalism," as Clayton describes it. The ideal of a "trans-national America" was in part Bourne's response to the record immigration from 1900 to 1915, when more than 14 million immigrants arrived in America, many of them Italians, Slavs, and Russian and Polish Jews. Old-stock Americans reacted with xenophobic paranoia, forming "protective associations" and anti-immigration leagues. Prominent scholars, in their disquisitions on the evolutionary "superiority" of peoples of Nordic extraction, gave pseudoscientific validation to the prejudices of the mob. The Brahmin Ellery Sedgwick, a powerful cultural arbiter as editor of the *Atlantic*, asked Bourne, "What have we to learn of the institutions of democracy from the Huns, the Poles, the Slavs?"

Despite his objections, Sedgwick, who had published some of Bourne's undergraduate essays, recognized the power of "Trans-National America" and published it in the July 1916 *Atlantic*. Bourne began the essay with an attack on Sedgwick's class, the "hard-hearted Old Brahmins virtuously indignant at the spectacle of the immigrant refusing to be melted." He decried

> the publicists who express themselves as stunned by the evidence of vigorous nationalistic and cultural movements in this country among Germans, Scandinavians, Bohemians, and Poles, . . . [and who] insist that the alien shall be forcibly assimilated to that Anglo-Saxon tradition which they unquestioningly label "American."

Nationalistic sentiments among immigrant groups, far from signaling "the failure of Americanization," afforded Americans the opportunity, Bourne wrote, "to assert a higher ideal than the 'melting-pot.'" With characteristic sweep and vigor he proclaimed,

> Surely we cannot be certain of our spiritual democracy when, claiming to melt the nations within us to a comprehension of our free and democratic institutions, we fly into panic at the first sign of their own will and tendency. . . . All our elaborate machinery of settlement and school and union, of social and political naturalization, . . . will move with friction just insofar as it neglects . . . this strong and virile insistence that America shall be what the immigrant will have a hand in making it, and not what a ruling class, descendant of those British stocks which were the first permanent immigrants, decides that America shall be made.

Bourne's ideal of a "trans-national America," Clayton observes, demanded "something far more vigorous than an acceptance of differences"; it required "a giant leap of the imagination" to encompass what Bourne called the "cosmopolitan vision."

In 1916, in the face of Europe driven to war by, among other things, nationalism run rampant, Bourne asked Americans (officially still neutral) to see themselves as "citizen[s] of the world." Cosmopolitanism, he noted, meant not rootlessness or cultural amnesia but a "dual citizenship" in which allegiance and attachment to a particular culture would foster a stable center of self from which one might extend one's sense of kinship to all humankind. While he may have underestimated the difficulty of balancing political and cultural allegiances, he did understand, as Christopher Lasch has succinctly paraphrased him, that "true cosmopolitanism has to be rooted in particularism." To cultivate cosmopolitanism would be to transcend "the weary old nationalism—belligerent, exclusive, inbreeding," and thus make possible, Bourne affirmed, "the good life of personality lived in the environment of the Beloved Community."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOURNE'S AFFIRMATION QUICKLY GAVE WAY to denunciation when America betrayed his hopes and, he thought, its own promise by entering the war in April 1917:

> The war—or American promise: one must choose. One cannot be interested in both. For the effect of the war will be to impoverish American promise. It cannot advance it, however liberals may choose to identify American promise with a league of nations to enforce peace.

Bourne reserved his most scathing invective for his former colleagues, the liberal intellectuals at the *New Republic*. For two years he had been a contributing editor to the magazine. He now was eased out as his radical antiwar opinions diverged from the editors'. To Bourne's horror, they published a self-congratulatory piece lauding what they saw as their influence in moving America into the war. Bourne responded in "The War and the Intellectuals," published in the June 1917 issue of that lamentably short-lived journal, the *Seven Arts*: "A war deliberately made by the intellectuals! . . . An intellectual class, gently guiding a nation through sheer force of ideas into what other nations entered only through predatory craft or popular hysteria or militarist madness!" In fact, Bourne claimed, the intellectuals had placed themselves in the service of powers that they should have resisted at all cost.

Had the intellectuals not mistaken their servitude for influence, they might have worked to create a trans-national America. They might, wrote Bourne,

> have been occupied . . . in discovering a true Americanism which . . . might have federated the different ethnic groups and traditions. They might have spent the time in endeavoring to clear the public mind of the cant of war, to get rid of the old mystical notions that clog our thinking.

At these grand tasks, Bourne admitted, the intellectuals "might have failed," but "the point is that they scarcely tried."

In the "cant of war" that Americans uncritically accepted was, Bourne noted, the idea that America entered the war to make the world safe for democracy. To Bourne capitalism and democracy were mutually exclusive. In a 1915 article he asked, "Do we realize the deep gulf between our own individualistic democracy, which we have proved in America leads only to plutocracy, and genuine social democracy?" In 1917 he acutely characterized the "plutocracy" as the maintenance crew for an efficient and profitable war machine:

> The government of a modern organized plutocracy does not have to ask whether the people want to fight or understand what they are fighting for, but only whether they will tolerate fighting. . . . Once maneuvered, [the conduct of war] takes care of itself, provided only that our industrial rulers see that the end of the war will leave American capital in a strategic position for world-enterprise.

Bourne condensed these insights into the chilling aphorism known to many who do not know its originator: "War is the health of the state."

"One has a sense," wrote a deeply disappointed Bourne in October 1917, "of having come to a sudden, short stop at the end of an intellectual era," an era of extravagant hope and possibility. Commentators on Bourne, Clayton observes, tend to make him a symbol of the youthful spirit devastated by the Great War. They emphasize the contrast between the radiant optimism of Bourne's precocious undergraduate essays, published in 1913 as *Youth and Life*, and the dark disillusionment of the antiwar essays published in 1917 in the *Seven Arts*. Nevertheless, "even in his darkest moments," says Clayton, Bourne maintained "a sustaining faith." He rejected consolatory myths of inevitable progress but maintained a doggedly willed optimism.

Bourne was a "genius" in the Emersonian tradition: "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men—that is genius." When in wartime the truth of his heart went contrary to almost universally received opinion, he suffered the isolation of the soothsayer who speaks what no one wants to hear. He enjoyed, however, the satisfaction of living true to the principles of radicalism as he had come to define them: a difficult dialectic of commitment and detachment, a "spiritual vagabondage," and a resolution to remain "fiercely and concentratedly intellectual."

In 1918 Bourne's intellectual isolation was mitigated by the genial company of Esther Cornell, an attractive and intelligent woman who could see beyond Bourne's deformities, respond to his intellectual wooing, say she loved him and that she wanted to marry him. But it was not to be. In his cold New York apartment Bourne fell ill, stricken by that year's worldwide epidemic of influenca. Esther and her roommate nursed him, but Bourne succumbed. The funeral service was held on Christmas eve, 1918. "When he died," wrote Paul Rosenfeld, a *Seven Arts* colleague who had sat by Bourne on his deathbed, "we knew that perhaps the strongest mind of the entire younger generation in America had gone."

A generous selection of Bourne's essays remains

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in print in *The Radical Will* (New York: Urizen Books, 1977), edited by Olaf Hansen. One should read the essays first, then, for an even-handed appraisal of Bourne's life and a clear discussion of his ideas in historical context, turn to Clayton's *Forgotten Prophet*. Clayton's biography is welcome not least because it ensures that for the moment Bourne will not suffer the fate implied in the book's title. □

Emanuel Geltman

Vision & the Union

UNION POWER & NEW YORK: VICTOR GOTBAUM AND DISTRICT COUNCIL 37, by Jewel and Bernard Bellush. New York: Praeger. 496 pp. $33.95 cloth; $14.95 paper.

Consider that District Council 37 had fewer than 1,000 members when Jerry Wurf took over its leadership in 1952, and that it ultimately embraced a multiethnic, multiracial mix of locals, from laborers (Local 924), to hospital employees (Local 420), Museum of Natural History employees (1559), New York City psychologists (1189), accountants, actuaries, and statisticians (1407), park attendants (1505), Metropolitan Museum of Art employees (1503)—all representing members with varying degrees of education—and you have a "rags to riches" story that is truly remarkable. There are now some 60 locals, plus a Retirees' Association, for a total membership of 110,000 in District Council 37 (New York City's branch of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees—AFSCME), making it the largest municipal union in the country.

Consider as well that, although the Council did not have to confront the goons so commonly used by private industry against union organizers, it had to face restrictive and repressive state legislation (first the Condon–Wadlin Act, later the Taylor law; both threatened and, in fact, imposed severe penalties on public employees who dared to resort to a basic union strategy, the strike) and you open a small window on the odds stacked against any union of public employees.

Add as well jurisdictional, sometimes fratricidal conflicts with competing unions. Add, in more recent years, a municipal fiscal crisis that pressed with particular severity on New York's public employees, and you begin to wonder how a municipal workers' union could survive, grow, and even earn the grudging respect of high-finance circles congenitally antipathetic to unions.

Other unions faced similar problems in New York City and overcame them, too—among them, teachers (in the United Federation of Teachers), transit workers (in the TWU), and teamsters. Throughout, the city's unions have had to deal and negotiate with city administrations from, say, Robert F. Wagner, Jr. (who hardly shared the devotion of his famous father, Senator Wagner, to the rights of union organization), to John V. Lindsay (who, at least, learned something from his first week's stupid encounter with a transit workers' strike), to our incumbent mayor, Edward I. Koch (who seems to have learned little but to shoot off his mouth while polarizing the city). Of all the unions, whether local or regional groupings, none has had to satisfy the needs of so many different elements, many among the lowest paid in the city, yet none has expanded as rapidly as District Council 37, while infusing its members with a sense of dignity and purpose.

THIS EXTRAORDINARY FLOURISHING required, of course, a core of determined and devoted members and leadership, at all levels. Above all, amid internal rivalries and jealousies—emerging, inevitably, as the Council grew from barely a handful of organizers to a complex organization with lobbyists, educators, experts in virtually every field of operation—the union's tasks required leadership of unusual caliber. This it had under Jerry Wurf ("charismatic and messianic," also irascible, abrasive), and for the last two decades under Victor Gotbaum (conciliatory, imaginative, yet not beyond "having it out" sharply with other unionists, or with the powers-that-be, while making friends with a few of them).

Whatever the leaders' sad, regrettable differences, and they surely had them, they shared a common belief that a union had to do more for its members than bargain for wages. Wurf had become a socialist in his youth, and Gotbaum was, and is, animated by a similar commitment to a social vision that sees the union fighting for security and decent wages while providing, for example, educational opportunities and such other services as legal aid. Their differences in personality

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and conception of how to operate a union without interference from above, and in accord with local needs, developed into a bitter relationship to the point where Gotbaum—who had been brought to "37" by Wurf and became its head when Wurf succeeded Arnold Zander as president of AFSCME—almost challenged Wurf for the national presidency, withdrawing only when some expected support in other regions disintegrated. (For the record, after Wurf's death, Gerald McEntee assumed the presidency.)

The description of the relationship between these two, Wurf and Gotbaum, takes up a significant part of the book the Bellushes have written. In a way, the reader may even find it titillating. But that's to miss the large picture, and to overlook all the other principals who contributed to the growth and quality of the union. Lillian Roberts, for example, who was brought to New York from Chicago by Gotbaum. (Gotbaum, a native New Yorker, had, so to speak, served his "apprenticeship" in Chicago where, before returning to New York, he had been appointed Chicago/Cook County director of AFSCME by Zander.)

While in Chicago, Gotbaum had the painful experience of leading a strike of hospital workers in voluntary hospitals—for a $1-an-hour minimum wage. This in the 1950s! He virtually slept on the picket line, and the workers were solid; but they went down to defeat. They continued to admire his dedication, but Gotbaum learned that you can't call a strike without realistically weighing its chances of success.... (By way of rounding this out, Lillian Roberts contributed mightily to the achievements of the Council. Today she is New York State's labor commissioner, the first woman, and the first black, to hold the post.)

THE BOOK IS AWASH IN DETAIL. The authors seem to have left no stone unturned, which does require the reader's painstaking attention but is eventually rewarding. Whether recounting how hostile relations with a Teamsters local turned to friendly cooperation when Gotbaum effected an accommodation with Barry Feinstein (when Feinstein became president of Teamsters Local 237); or telling how many of the municipal unions were brought into the Municipal Labor Committee (including Albert Shanker of the UFT, with whom Gotbaum had hardly been on friendly terms); or describing the formation of the Municipal Assistance Corporation (MAC), with the unions putting up millions in pension funds to rescue the city (out of which grew a close friendship with Felix Rohatyn, an investment banker from the other side of the tracks)—all these convolutions and complicated proceedings are reported in minute detail. If this microscopic examination impedes casual reading, it offers a "macroscopic" understanding of how unions and politics interact, and thereby illuminates much we should know about unions in general.

Rumor has it that Gotbaum will have to retire soon, under union regulations. Rather a pity because, in his two decades at the helm of "37," he has demonstrated what can be accomplished. Alas, there are signs of division, of jockeying for position. However, the foundation for a vigorous, far-sighted union remains in place. As for Gotbaum, he is much too vital and enterprising a person to fade from the scene. There has to be a place for him somewhere in labor's councils. □

Robert D. Holsworth

Individualism Revisited

HABITS OF THE HEART: INDIVIDUALISM AND COMMITMENT IN AMERICAN LIFE, by Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton. Berkeley: University of California Press. 355 pp. $16.95.

The consequences of American individualism have been a principal subject for observers of this nation since Tocqueville. What connections can be traced between our individualistic ethos and social practices? How does individualism contribute to or hinder the democratic process? Is it possible that individualism can proceed too far and begin to rip apart the country's social fabric? These questions are as enduring in American intellectual life as the ethic of self-reliance in the culture at large.

In recent years, these issues have become part of the controversy about the advantages and liabilities of modernity. Put simply, there are two general lines of argument about modern individualism. The first suggests that the general breakdown of cultural norms and the decline in respect for authority contain a genuinely liberating potential. Supporters of this outlook believe that despite the terrors

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that can accompany modernity, individuals are left free—freer than ever before—to create an identity of their own choosing and select the community that they will inhabit. This argument has been given its most eloquent expression, I think, in Marshall Berman's *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982). A second point of view insists that the entire project of modernity is fundamentally flawed insofar as it posits an "unencumbered self" that is not integrally attached to tradition, religion, and community. This condition is said to result not only in disastrous social consequences but in a diminution of the very self that modernity celebrates. Authors as diverse as Wendell Berry, Jean Elshtain, Christopher Lasch, and Alasdair MacIntyre have published important books upholding variants of this position.

Habits of the Heart is a contribution to this debate that weighs in on the side of the latter perspective. Bellah and his associates interviewed about 200 middle-class Americans to discover their attitude to private and public life. They explored their ideas about love, marriage, personal responsibility, community, social involvement, and political participation. While only about 10 of those who were interviewed are quoted with any frequency, the composite of middle-class life that they developed rang true with me, though it will undoubtedly irritate the promoters of the opportunity society.

Here is the principal line of argument. Most Americans have adopted a philosophy of radical individualism in which "each self constitutes its own moral universe and there is finally no way to reconcile conflicting claims about what is good in itself." The consequences of this development are uniformly harmful. As individuals, we have lost the capacity to see our work as a calling and to understand the basis of our relations with others. We struggle to make sense out of our most heartfelt sentiments because the language of radical individualism does not permit us to express the "fullness of being" that we actually possess. As a society, we find it difficult to speak about shared purposes and to develop standards for judging whether we are meeting them. "We have committed what to the republican founders of our nation was the cardinal sin: we have put our own good, as individuals, as groups, as a nation, ahead of the common good." The authors maintain that these tendencies are most prominent among people involved in what they label the therapeutic culture, but that they are visible in all corners of American society.

Bellah and associates believe, however, that the redeeming feature of American life is that most people also speak a second language, even if it is voiced with less confidence than the primary vocabulary of egoism. In this second language, individualism is tempered by the concerns for community, by religious commitments, and by a desire to preserve shared meanings. So the therapists who describe their treatment goals as making people feel good about themselves also recommend that their patients involve themselves with a church in order to participate in a living community. The men and women who claim that their marriage is grounded only in the temporary preferences of each partner also speak about the obligations incurred through a history of shared experience with another person. And the community activists who cannot specify their vision of a reformed America are clearly groping for a more adequate conception of justice.

The authors argue that a better future is dependent upon increasing the prominence of this second language, reappropriating the "biblical and republican traditions that the small town once embodied . . . in ways that respond to our present need." They advocate a change "in the meaning of work from private aggrandizement to public contribution" and a restoration of the early 19th-century belief that corporations were required to act in a socially responsible manner in return for the authority ceded to them by the public. Bellah also calls for the formation of a social movement that would be dedicated to lessening the disparity between the rich and the poor and would "restore the dignity and legitimacy of democratic politics."

THIS IS, in some ways, an admirable book. It addresses significant issues; it is written with more gracefulness than is common in social science; and it does retain a measure of hope while vigorously indicting American culture. The emphasis on the continuing relevance of the biblical and republican traditions also provides an interesting perspective from which to view the resurgence of antinuclear politics in the '80s, the proliferation of community action groups, and the sanctuary movement.

Despite these virtues, I think that few readers will come away very satisfied. I was surprised, for instance, that a book advocating the restoration of community would be so inattentive to the experiments with building it that have recently been undertaken. To be sure, the authors do mention the Institute for the Study of Civic Values, the Campaign for Economic Democracy, and a small Episcopal church that is socially active in the Bay area. But these are either given scant attention or de-

(Continued on the Third Cover)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Irving Howe

Thinking About Socialism

Achievements, Failures, and Possibilities

Christianity did not "die" in the 19th century. Millions held fast to the faith; churches survived; theological controversies flourished. Yet we can now see that in the decades after the Enlightenment Christianity suffered deep wounds that could not be healed, sometimes were even made worse, by the sincere efforts of various thinkers to refine and revise the faith. Gradually Christianity lost its claim to speak for the whole of Western culture; gradually it lost the ability to seize and hold the imagination of serious young people. Some of them it could still attract, but not with the assurance of the past.

Has something like this been happening to socialism these past several decades? Powerful parties in Europe still employ the socialist vocabulary and millions of people still accept the socialist label; yet some deep inner crisis of belief, to say nothing of public failures and defeats, has beset socialism. The soaring passions of the early movement are gone, and those of us who strive for socialist renewal cannot help wondering whether we are caught in a drift of historical decline, perhaps beyond reversing, perhaps to yield at some future moment to a new radical humanism. And perhaps, too, it does not really matter: each generation must do what it can.

•

> To the question of the elements of social restructure [that is, socialism] . . . Marx and Engels never gave a positive answer, because they had no inner relation to this idea. Marx might occasionally allude to "the elements of the new society" . . . but . . . the political act of revolution remained the one thing worth striving for. . . .[1]

This observation by Martin Buber, while slightly overstated, embodies an essential truth. Marx and Engels praised the early 19th century "utopian socialists" for their boldness in projecting visions of a new Golden Age, but they were also contemptuous of the utopians' habit of indulging in detailed "future-painting." Where the utopians, wrote Marx, pictured a socialist society as "an ideal to which reality will have to adjust itself,"[2] he saw the movement toward socialism as a necessary outcome of concrete social conflicts. Marx wanted to place the socialist project within the course of historical development, and this he did by specifying two driving forces within history: first, the evolution of economic techniques and structures, leading to a concentration of ownership and wealth, a recurrence of social crisis and a sharpening of class conflict; and second, the gathering strength and rising consciousness of the working class, derived from or enabled by its crucial position within the capitalist economy. By now it seems clear that Marx was keener in analyzing the "driving forces" of the economy than in allocating the "tasks" of the proletariat, a class that has shown itself capable of intermittent rebellion but not, at least thus far, of serving as the creator of a new society.

To read the passages in Marx's writings that deal with the socialist future—they are scattered, infrequent, and fragmentary—is to rec-

This essay is excerpted from *Socialism and America* by Irving Howe. Copyright © 1985 by Irving Howe. To be published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ognize how valid the charge is that on this matter he slips into a vague and static perfectionism. From his remarks we get a vision of a world marvelously free of social—and indeed nonsocial—conflict: no longer in thrall to alienation, exploitation, and social fetishism, humanity reaches, for the first time, a high plateau of the human. In the Marxist anticipation of the good society there is little recognition of the sheer recalcitrance of all social arrangements, the limitations that characterize the human species, the likely persistence into the future of error, stupidity, and bad will. Even convinced socialists must by now feel some skepticism about this version of utopia.

Marxists would reply, with some irritation, that their vision of ultimate social harmony depends on the unfolding of a lengthy historical sequence during which not only new values and habits, but a new humanity would emerge. Perhaps so. There is no way to disprove such expectations, any more than to dispel the skepticism they arouse. Far more troubling, at least for a socialist living toward the end of the 20th century, is the fact that this vision of a society in which "the state withers away" and "the antithesis between physical and mental labor vanishes" does very little to help us achieve a qualitatively better, if still imperfect, society—the kind that some of us call socialism.

It's only fair to add that Marx's failure to engage critically with the problem of the envisaged socialist society did have some positive aspects. If the society of the future is to be entrusted to its living actors, then Marx was right, perhaps, in thinking it imprudent to detail its features in advance. History must be left to those who will make it.

But there is another, less attractive reason for Marx's failure to draw "the face" of a socialist society. Marxism offers a strong theory of social change but has little to say about political arrangements—structures of government, balances of power, agencies of representation. Marxism has usually failed to consider with sufficient attention what we might call the trans- or supra-class elements of politics—those elements likely to be present (and perplexing) in any society. Except for some brilliant remarks in his *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx gave little weight to politics as an autonomous activity, politics as more than epiphenomenon, politics as a realm with its own powers, procedures, and norms. As Paul Ricoeur has written,

> Politics embodies a human relationship which is not reducible to class conflict or socioeconomic tensions. . . . Even the state most in subjection to a dominant class is also a state precisely to the extent that it expresses the fundamental will of the nation as a whole. . . . On the other hand, politics develops evils of its own—evils specific to the exercise of power.[3]

From such perceptions emerges a problematic view of the entire process of change that is supposed to lead to socialism. But if some sophisticated Marxists have recently begun to recognize the autonomy of politics, it must in honesty be added that this was by no means the prevalent view of the socialist movement during its formative, most powerful years. During the three or four decades after Marx's death, the movement as an institution grew stronger, but its vision of the goal for which it was striving declined into a slackness of perfection, only tenuously, through a papery chain of rhetoric, related to the issues and struggles of the moment. Socialism came gradually to be "defined" as a condition of classlessness, seen more as premise than problem; and since the inclination of Marxists was to think about conflicts and evils as the consequence of class domination, it followed—did it not?—that the eradication of classes must sooner or later mean the disappearance of these afflictions. I exaggerate a little, but not, I fear, very much.

AMONG SOCIAL DEMOCRATS this habit of thought encouraged an easy confidence in the benefits of historical evolution; among revolutionary Marxists, a faith in the self-elected vanguard party that would satisfy the ends of history.

Until about the First World War, this genial mythicizing of an assured future may not have done too much damage, for in those years the main work of the left was to rouse the previously mute lower classes to the need for historical action. Indeed, the visionary tone of early Marxism helped give the workers a quasi-religious confidence in their own powers. Had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the movement achieved nothing else, this arousal of the plebes would still be to its credit. In fact, it also helped bring about valuable social changes, a sequence of reforms eventuating in the welfare state.

The problem of socialism would become acute when a socialist movement approached power or, in quite different circumstances, when it was weak and under sharp intellectual attack. In both of these extreme circumstances, the poverty of Marxist (not all socialist) thought regarding the "face of socialism" becomes very serious. Between immediate struggles for specific reforms and rosy invocations of the cooperative commonwealth still to come, *a whole space is missing*—the space of social reconstruction. In the writings of the English guild socialists we find some hints on these matters, but not enough. Only in the last 15 or 20 years, under the impact of crisis and defeat, has some of that "missing space" been occupied through the writings of a number of serious thinkers—I shall discuss them later—who have tried to offer some guidelines (not blueprints) for a socialist society. The work is just beginning. Can it still be in time? I do not know.

II

Why has the European social democracy been unable to advance further than the welfare state of Scandinavia? I list some of the possible answers: social democratic parties often have come to office without parliamentary majorities, which meant they had to enter coalitions that imposed severe constraints. Social democratic parties were often voted into office at moments when capitalist economies were suffering breakdowns, which meant that precisely the condition prompting their victories also limited their capacity for taking radical measures. Social democratic parties in office frequently had to face flights of capital, a problem that, within the limits of the nation-state, proved very difficult to cope with. And social democratic parties, settling into the routines of institutional life, began to lose their radical edge.

For my present purposes, I want to stress another, important if not decisive, reason for the difficulties of social democratic parties. They often had no clear idea, no worked-out vision, of what a socialist transformation might entail. Given their commitment to democracy, their justified distaste for Bolshevik dictatorship, and their recognition that a good part of their electorate cared more about particular measures than a new society, they began to find the idea of socialism increasingly slippery, evanescent, insubstantial. No doubt, in some instances there were also the betrayals of principle that the far left charged against social democracy, but most of the time, I think, social democrats were victimized by their own intellectual slackness. They thought they knew what had to be done the next day, but when it came to their sacred "historic mission," they often grew uncertain and timid. And sometimes they were struck dumb.

Not so the Bolsheviks. *They knew.* Their aura of certainty, their persuasion that history lay snugly in the party's fist helped the Communists win the support of many European workers and intellectuals during the years between the world wars. Yet even a glance at the Bolshevik record after the November 1917 revolution will show that Lenin and his comrades had only the most sketchy and confused ideas about the socioeconomic policies that might enable a socialist transformation. The seizure of power—about *that* they could speak with authority.

Shortly before the Russian Revolution, Lenin had written that if the Bolsheviks came to power in backward, war-devastated Russia they would establish "workers' control" over industry; but he did not propose large-scale nationalizations. From November 1917 to the summer of 1918, the Bolsheviks favored what we'd now call a mixed economy, in which, for a time at least, large areas of private ownership of industry would continue, but production and investment decisions would be controlled by the leftist state together, presumably, with working-class institutions.

This view was in accord with Lenin's realistic understanding that socialism—seen traditionally by Marxists as a society presupposing economic abundance and a high level of culture—could not be achieved in a country such as Russia, certainly not without substantial aid from the industrial West.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Once in power, the Bolsheviks veered wildly in their economic policies. At the start of the civil war they abandoned their initial moderation and introduced the draconian measures of war communism: virtually complete nationalization of enterprises, the requisitioning of agricultural product, and a highly centralized political-economic command. Many Bolsheviks came to regard all this as the appropriate road to socialism, though in later years some of them would admit that grave errors had been made.

War communism intensified the economic disaster that was by then well advanced as a result of Russian defeats in the war. There now followed a sharp drop in production: further depletion of industrial plant; a radical cut in the size of the working class; a decline in labor productivity, and so on. Some of these conditions were a result of difficulties created by the civil war; some because of a mixture of Bolshevik arrogance and inexperience; but some were the fruit of a by then habitual refusal on the left to think concretely and problematically about the social transformation that might follow upon the assumption of political power.

Between 1917 and 1923 Bolshevik oscillations on economic policy found a vivid reflection in Trotsky's writings. At one point he proposed the creation of labor armies, a kind of militarized garrison economy; this ghastly idea, meeting with bitter resistance from Bolshevik and other trade unionists, was rejected. At another point, veering sharply, Trotsky proposed an economic course anticipating the New Economic Policy that would in fact be introduced in 1921: a considerable loosening of state controls, a return to a partially free market, something like a mixed economy. This proposal was at first rejected by the Bolsheviks, but under the pressures of reality they finally introduced the NEP. What we can see here is a deep incoherence, a floundering by gifted ideologues who had not anticipated, while still out of power and in a position to think theoretically, that the taking of power would by no means exempt them from the difficulties faced by their adversaries.

In his biography of the "right" Bolshevik leader Bukharin, Stephen F. Cohen remarks that Lenin took a "censorious attitude toward discussing future problems. He preferred Napoleon's advice, 'On s'engage et puis . . . on voit.'" (One engages, and then . . . one sees.)[4] Alas, we have seen.

III

Were I writing here a comprehensive study of modern socialism, a central emphasis would have to be put on the enormous damage wrought by Stalinism once it became a powerful force in the 1930s. Insofar as right-wing and left-wing dogmatists found it convenient to identify the Russian dictatorship with socialism, they joined to discredit the entire socialist idea. And insofar as the identification was popularly accepted, so was the discrediting.

One result was that the already festering crisis of socialist thought grew much more severe. And now, for the past several decades, the socialist experience has involved a dislodgment of received persuasions, a melting-down of ideological structures, and a search for new—or for cleansed and reaffirmed old—values. For socialists, individually, this was often a clarifying and chastening experience; but for their movement it brought grave difficulties. Introspection rarely makes for public effectiveness.

Many socialists of my generation would customarily defend their belief through what I'd call a hygienic negative: "We entirely reject any sort of party-state dictatorship: the very thought of it is appalling. Nor do we want a complete nationalization of industry. . . . Less and less does that seem an avenue to the cooperative commonwealth."

After a time such responses came close to being instinctive. Serious socialists would now describe the desired society by invoking desired *qualities*, with a stress on sentiments of freedom, attitudes of fraternity, and, sometimes, priorities of social allocation. They proposed, first of all, to secure the socialist idea in the realm of values, whereas, to simplify a little, the tradition in which some of us had been raised was one that focused on institutional changes. In making this shift, these socialists were doing something morally and politically necessary but also tactically disabling. For unless plausible social structures and agencies could be located for realizing the values that were now being placed at the center

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of socialist thought, we were finally left with little more than our good will.*

Nevertheless, the clarification of socialist values was the essential task during, say, the past half-century: little of importance could be accomplished on the left until that was done. And if these values are now accepted as truisms, it is because a bitter struggle had to be conducted in their behalf. It is useful to restate a few:

- *There is no necessary historical sequence from capitalism to socialism, nor any irrefutable reason for supposing history moves along a steadily upward curve. Unforeseen societies—mixed, retrogressive, opaque—can persist for long periods of time.*
- *The abolition of capitalism is not necessarily a step toward human liberation; it can lead, and has led, to societies far more repressive than capitalism at its worst.*
- *Socialism is not to be "defined" as a society in which private property has been abolished; what is decisive is the political character of the regime exercising control over a postcapitalist or mixed economy.*
- *Socialism should be envisaged as a society in which the means of production, to an extent that need not be rigidly determined in advance, are collectively or socially owned—which means, democratically controlled. An absolute prerequisite is the preservation and growth of democracy.*
- *A "complete" transformation of humanity is a corrupt fantasy that can lead to a mixture of terror and apathy.*

One painful yet predictable result of this reshaping, or cleansed reassertion, of the socialist idea was that in the very course of being given an increasingly humane and democratic character, it also came to suffer from greater uncertainty with regard to social arrangements and institutional mechanisms. The reassertion of values led to skepticism about major elements of traditional Marxist thought. Three instances:

(1) *The assumption that the proletariat would serve as the leading agency of social transformation.*

History has vetoed this idea. The working class has not been able to "transcend" its role within capitalist society, except perhaps during brief outbursts of rebellion; and now, as a result of technological innovations, its specific gravity as social class and political actor seems to be in decline.** As if in response to this development, there has appeared a tendency to regard socialism as a goal transcending the interests of one or another class. There is something attractive about this, but also something that betrays political uncertainty. For to say that a social vision is the province of all risks making it the passion of none.

(2) *The assumption that the nationalization of industry would, if accompanied by a socialist winning of office, smooth the way for the new society.*

Significant socialist texts can readily be cited making it clear that nationalization is not necessarily to be taken as an equivalent or even precondition of socialism.† Yet it would be misleading to lean too heavily on these texts, since I am certain that older socialists share the

---

* An illuminating parallel can be found in a passage from the British philosopher Stuart Hampshire:

> For me socialism is not so much a theory as a set of moral injunctions, which seem to me clearly right and rationally justifiable: first, that the elimination of poverty ought to be the first priority of government after defense; secondly, that as great inequalities in wealth between different social groups lead to inequalities in power and in freedom of action, they are generally unjust and need to be redressed by governmental action; thirdly, that democratically elected governments ought to ensure that primary and basic human needs are given priority within the economic system, even if this involves some loss in the aggregate of goods and services which would otherwise be available. How these moral requirements are best realized, at particular times and places . . . are matters for the social sciences and also for a critical reading of history; after them also for personal experience and for worldly insight. . . .[5]

Now I find this very sympathetic, but suspect it's open to the charge that it contains nothing distinctively socialist. Could not many liberals endorse Stuart Hampshire's "moral injunctions"? It's only when we come to specific proposals for putting these injunctions into practice that the socialist case can be said to stand or fall.

** As a matter of historical justice I should add that once we free the working class from the "tasks" imposed on it by Marxism, we can recognize that, as the main unpropertied class in modern society, it has exerted a strong and positive pressure to bring about major improvements in the social order.

† As far back as 1892, Karl Kautsky, an accredited legatee of Marx, wrote: "It does not follow that every

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

recollection that there was a strong habitual tendency to put great faith in the value of nationalization.

In the Communist dictatorships the mere takeover of industry has made for a frightful concentration (and fusion) of political and economic power. In some capitalist countries, portions of the economy have been nationalized, sometimes because socialist governments wished to make at least a dent in bourgeois ownership, sometimes because governments, bourgeois or socialist, came to the rescue of enterprises on the brink of bankruptcy. The results have not been very inspiring, especially when no efforts were made to introduce democratic workers' participation in the management of newly nationalized industries.

Serious problems have arisen in the operation of such industries, some of them caused by the inherent difficulties of functioning through a calculus of profit while trying, within an economy still largely capitalist, to satisfy social goals. What should be the criteria for measuring efficiency in nationalized enterprises? If taken over because they have failed in private hands, what order of losses should society be prepared to accept? How are decisions to be made regarding capital investment? Such questions can be answered; and in part the answers are similar to those that might be provided with regard to private enterprise (since the criterion of profitability cannot simply be dismissed); but the answers should also be different from those prevailing under private enterprise (since such factors as "externalities" are now to be taken into systematic account).

Nationalization of industry has been part of a worldwide drift toward the interpenetration of state and society. It can be a device for trying to solve a crisis of capitalist economy; it can perhaps help to create a modern infrastructure in third-world economies; it can form part of the breakdown of "civil society" that enables the rise of totalitarianism; and it can be initiated by a socialist government intent upon deepening democratic practices in all areas of social life. Nationalization seems, in short, to be a somewhat neutral device, available to just about every kind of government; but, whatever else, it is surely not a sufficient condition for a socialist transformation.

(3) *The assumption that economic planning is a unique aspect or virtue of socialist society, ensuring both justice and orderliness in economic affairs, such as unplanned economies are not likely to match.*

By now we have learned otherwise. Planning does not necessarily offer an encompassing method for the solution of socioeconomic problems. As earlier Marxists such as Kautsky and Bukharin glimpsed, planning does not have to wait for the happy arrival of socialism, but is at least partly to be found in "late"—that is, monopoly or cartel—versions of capitalism. Like any other human enterprise, planning is subject to error, manipulation, bureaucratic sluggishness, and sheer bad will, so that it must always be tentative, proximate, and fallible. "Total" planning—that is, a command economy—entails authoritarian political structures.

Democratic planning, in which many socialists place great hope, is at once attractive, complex, and problematic. There are ways in which planning must always be somewhat at odds with democratic procedures, if only because it often depends, in modern societies, on skilled professionals who are likely to develop their own caste or bureaucratic interests. On the other hand, "popular participation [can] inform the planner about the social terrain he is trying to map; the planner [can] facilitate the democratic process by presenting to the people intelligent alternatives for their choice."[8] No

---

nationalization of an economic function or an industry is a step toward the cooperative commonwealth. . . . If the modern state nationalizes certain industries, it does not do so for the purpose of restricting capitalist exploitation, but for the purpose of protecting the capitalist system. . . . As an exploiter of labor, the state is superior to any private capitalist."[6]

And Morris Hillquit, the American Socialist leader: "Socialists entertain no illusions as to the benefits of governmentally owned industries under the present regime. . . . Its effect may be decidedly reactionary. . . . The demand for national or municipal ownership of industries is always qualified [by socialists] with a provision for the democratic administration of such industries . . ."[7]

I cite these two influential figures to show that such ideas do go back to earlier generations of socialist thinkers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

assertion of general principles can remove the constant need for a nuanced and vigilant mediation between agencies of planning and a political democracy.

If, then, one turns to the revisions in socialist thinking that we have had to make in recent decades, it becomes clear that we find ourselves in an uncomfortable but, I would contend, worthwhile difficulty—refining our values, growing somewhat uncertain about our means. Leszek Kolakowski puts it well:

> Where are we now? What we lack in our thinking about society in socialist terms is not general values . . . but rather knowledge about how these values can be prevented from clashing with each other when put into practice. . . .
>
> Are we [then] fools to keep thinking in socialist terms? I do not think so. Whatever has been done in Western Europe to bring about more justice, more security, more educational opportunities, more welfare . . . could never have been achieved without the pressures of socialist ideologies and movements, for all their naivetés and illusions. This does not mean that we are exculpated in advance and allowed to cherish these illusions endlessly, after so many defeats.[9]

During the last 15 or 20 years, then, we have seen a significant shift in the nature and direction of socialist thought. The clarification of values to which some of us had to devote major energies has now been achieved, at least in part, and as a result socialist thinkers have been able to turn to a study of those institutions and mechanisms through which these values might be realized.

IV

A number of writers have tackled the problems that seem likely to appear during a "transition period" between capitalism and socialism. Such writers as Alec Nove, Michael Harrington, and Radoslav Selucky have offered proposals for the kind of immediate reforms (civil rights, women's rights, racial equality) that are not uniquely socialist in character but upon which liberals and socialists can happily agree. Next would come "structural reforms," such as tax proposals aiming at a gradual redistribution of income and wealth and efforts to achieve full employment, which would surely entail some overall economic planning. These latter "structural reforms" might be described as extending and deepening the welfare state. Beyond this second group of proposals lies a third—the kind that would begin to change the fundamental relationships of power and property, such as—

> [a] challenge to corporate control of the investment process by insisting that public policy concern itself with what is produced . . . [to] include public controls over private investment decisions, such as specifying the conditions under which corporations can leave a locality or oligopolies can raise prices. . . .[10]

Steps might also be taken toward creating "social property," pilot projects of enterprises democratically owned and controlled by employees, with the government encouraging, through generous credit and other provisions, the establishment of producer and consumer cooperatives, "small-scale, de-alienating, good for training workers in running their own affairs."[11]

Such a bundle of reforms, graduated in their social penetration, would signify a radical series of changes, even if not yet reaching a socialist society. One lesson to be learned from past efforts of socialist governments is that much depends on pacing. Too slow a rate of change disappoints enthusiastic followers; too rapid a rate can lead to the loss of middle-class support, excessive inflation (there is bound to be some), and serious disturbances. Choices would have to be made, so that fundamental socioeconomic measures would not be jeopardized by divisions over secondary or symbolic issues. And a socialist government, it should be remembered, would also have a stake in maintaining a good measure of national cohesion and civility, even if its legislation antagonized large property owners and small ideologues.

Such transitional measures, whatever their ultimate benefits, are certain to create immediate difficulties. Substantial benefits for the poorest segments of the population—absolutely; but if on too lavish a scale, these can result in an inflation threatening both the economic program and political stability of the government. Sweeping tax reforms—desirable; but if too sweeping, they can alienate segments of the middle class, whose support a socialist

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

government needs. A wealth tax—attractive; but it can lead to capital flight. Economic controls—probably unavoidable; but they entail the likelihood of shortages, black markets, misallocation of resources, economic imbalances.

One suggested way of alleviating these difficulties would be to stress the need for higher productivity, "a larger cake" so that most segments of the population would be satisfied with immediate benefits. But it's by no means certain that in a transitional period this could be achieved. And such proposals for economic growth would encounter a bumpy course: they would be opposed by people who fear the ecological consequences and think "consumerism" at variance with the socialist ethos, as well as by entrepreneurs and managers reluctant to help raise productivity at the very moment their "prerogatives" are being curbed. At least with regard to the managers, however, an imaginative government would work very hard to gain their cooperation, arguing that many of them, especially at middle levels, have no unalterable stake in perpetuating corporate control of economic life or in vast social inequities.

A democratic commitment—unconditional as it must be—may well delay and even thwart socialist programs. Socialist governments do not rest on undifferentiated popular support, and many of their voters might not wish them to go beyond limited reforms. Socialist governments must put into office people who lack experience and often, in consequence, make mistakes or slip into confusion. Socialist governments need to find channels to capital growth, but the tensions created by the changes they initiate can lead to panic and "sabotage" in capital markets. And even the best-conceived program of transition is likely to be hostage to the business cycle, as well as to imbalances of wealth and power among the nations.

A painful irony must here be acknowledged: many of the criticisms Leninists have made of social democratic reformism have a point, for instance, that timidity would inhibit radical initiatives, while radical excess could drive people of the political and social middle to become outright opponents. The Leninist conclusion is that the "transition period" requires a "temporary" abrogation of democracy, in the name, to be sure, of a "higher democracy." This cure, however, is far worse than any malady one can imagine, since "temporary" dictatorships have a way of slipping into permanence, especially those established by Communist parties. What's more, they usually fail to cope with the economic problems they alone are supposedly able to solve.

There is no undemocratic road to socialism; there are only undemocratic roads that can bring, and have brought, nations to barbaric mockeries of the socialist idea. If we were forced to conclude that there cannot be a democratic road to socialism, then we would also have to conclude that the entire socialist enterprise is illusory.

We understand now—experience must teach us *something*—that the transition from capitalism to socialism is likely to be a lengthy process, interrupted by setbacks, and fraught with tensions, conflicts, difficulties, and errors. But if it is to be a socialism of free men and women, there can be no other way.

V

Between the period of "transition" and a "full" or achieved socialism there is no thick or impenetrable wall. The distinction is mostly an analytical convenience. A healthy society must always be in transition; a dynamic socialism can never be "full."

What, then, would the social structure of a democratic socialist society look like? Mulling over this question, I find myself in some sympathy with the traditional leftist reluctance to indulge in "future painting." Certainly, there can be no call, at this point in history, for either prediction or prescription. But it is also too late to trust simply to the workings of history; tokens must be offered of the *direction* in which we hope to move.

But must not any discussion of a socialist society now seem remote, unrelated to current needs and concerns? It all depends on the spirit and terms in which we approach the matter. Everyone knows that today in the United States socialism is not on the political agenda; but can anyone be certain that there will not be new or recurrent social crises that will give an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unexpected relevance to at least some of the basic socialist proposals? Within or close to a number of European socialist parties there are significant groups of political people seriously trying to sketch out "the face of socialism." They understand that, in view of the volatility of modern history, it is necessary to think now with regard to what may be done the day after tomorrow. (And perhaps the day after tomorrow will come tomorrow.) There is, furthermore, one great advantage in being powerless, and that is that it enables, sometimes stimulates, serious thought. So with all the necessary qualifications as to tentativeness and speculativeness, I proceed to offer a sketch of a sketch, cheerfully pilfered from the work of several recent writers.*

Let us focus on two models for a democratic socialism offered by Radoslav Selucky, a Czech exile now living in the West, and Alec Nove, an economist living in Scotland.** As a matter of strict principle, both agree on the need for multiparty democracy. Anything remotely like the centralized "command economies" of Eastern Europe must be entirely avoided, since these are economically inept, politically repressive, and intellectually intolerable.† Both writers agree also on the need for a market economy, subject to controls by a democratic polity: laissez-faire would be quite as inoperative under advanced socialism as it has turned out to be under advanced capitalism. Where they differ significantly is with regard to structures of property and productive relations in a "market socialism." Selucky strongly favors social controls from below, while Nove would encourage a greater variety in the modes of ownership. Selucky's views on this matter seem more attractive, Nove's more realistic.

Selucky lists a number of concise premises for his model, and I quote the essential ones:

> The means of production are owned socially and managed by those who make use of them.
>
> Social ownership of the means of production is separated from the state.
>
> Producing and trading enterprises are autonomous from the state and independent of each other. They operate within the framework of the market, which is regulated by a central indicative plan.
>
> The institutions which provide health, education, and welfare services are wholly exempt from the market.
>
> The right to participate in direct management of the work units *operating in the market* is derived from labor.
>
> The right to participate in direct management of the work units *exempt wholly or partly from the market* is derived proportionally from labor, ownership, and consumption of the provided services and utilities.
>
> The right to participate in indirect political control over, and regulation of, the socially owned means of production is derived from one's position as a citizen.
>
> Health and education services and social benefits for the disabled are distributed according to one's needs.
>
> The principle of self-management is limited to microeconomic units only.[13]

This model, attractive in several respects, stresses—as, after the experiences of our century, socialists must stress—the separation of political and economic power. It proposes a dispersal of economic power in horizontal enterprises, each largely self-sustaining and freely administered, though subject both to market signals and social regulation. It provides consumers with freedom of choice, and citizens with free occupational and educational choices. It favors a market mechanism that would be interdependent with "indicative" planning—that is, planning not merely im-

---

* Among them Oscar Lange, Abram Bergson, George Lichtheim, Radoslav Selucky, Henry Pachter, Wlodzimierz Brus, Michael Harrington, and Alec Nove.

** Alec Nove's deeply interesting discussion appeared in the Summer 1985 *Dissent*.

† The centralized, authoritarian structure of the East European societies "requires that all basic economic decisions be made at the top of the social hierarchy. Because the producers are dispersed, of technological necessity, the basic division of labor between those who rule, control, plan and manage, and those who are ruled, controlled, planned and managed, cannot but remain in existence despite the nationalization of the means of production. From the functional point of view, it is irrelevant who has a formal title to property; *what is relevant is who disposes of it, who decides on it, who manipulates it, in whose interest one makes decisions and in whose interest controlling functions are exercised....*" [Emphasis in original.][12]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

posed from above but with institutional mechanisms for democratic decision-making and checks from below. And it rests on direct democracy within the workplace insofar as that is possible, and on representative democracy in the society as a whole.

This model presupposes the flourishing of "civil society" and its autonomous "secondary institutions" (such as trade unions, political groups, fraternal societies), apart from and, when necessary, in opposition to the state. The intent is clearly to enable a pluralist flexibility that is present in, though often only claimed for, capitalist democracy, while at the same time eliminating many of its socially retrogressive features.

In such a socialist society, wage levels would be subject to the law of supply and demand, shaped in part through collective bargaining undertaken by free trade unions, though also (as is sometimes now true in industrial nations) bounded by social regulations such as "incomes policies." Wage differentials would remain, in accordance with pressures of scarcity and skill, though again subject to social boundaries. The market would provide goods and services, regulating those prices not controlled for purposes of public policy (or those products the society might decide to provide without cost). And while, in its initial phases, a democratic socialist society would have to strive for increases in production and higher productivity, it might, after a time, through modest increments, supersede the efficiency principle in behalf of more attractive social ends.*

Alec Nove's model for democratic socialism differs from Selucky's in one crucial respect. Selucky, writes Nove,

> appears to envisage an evolution toward one type of producing unit. In my view it is possible and desirable to have several. . . . It is essential to recall the assumptions of political democracy. The citizens can choose, for example, what sorts of private initiative to encourage or to tolerate, the desirable forms of cooperatives, the extent of workers' participation in management, and much else besides. They can experiment, learn from experience, commit and correct errors. . . . Suppose that we have a legal structure which permits the following species:
>
> (1) State enterprises, centrally controlled and administered, hereinafter [called] *centralized state corporations*;
>
> (2) State-owned (or socially owned) enterprises with full autonomy and a management responsible to the workforce, hereinafter [called] *socialized enterprises*.
>
> (3) *Cooperative enterprises*.
>
> (4) *Small-scale private enterprise*, subject to clearly defined limits.
>
> (5) *Individuals* (for instance, freelance journalists, plumbers, artists).[15]

The idea of a greater diversity of production units is in principle appealing, since the aim of a socialist society ought to be the maximizing of opportunity, choice, and freedom within democratically agreed-upon bounds. The "centralized state corporations" would include banks and enterprises necessarily very large or occupying a monopoly position, or both—and with regard to all this there would be significant, large-scale economies.

Among examples of such "state corporations" are power stations, oil and petrochemical complexes. But the criterion here ought to be technological, not the corporate structure that prevails today, since some present-day corporations are large because of the power it gives them over the market rather than because of any criteria of efficiency. There might be the danger that some of these giant enterprises would assume a monopoly posture under socialism as disadvantageous to consumers and workers as it can be under capitalism. In order to rein in such enterprises, both of our models envisage "tripartite management" (government, consumers, workers).

In the socialized and cooperative enterprises, according to the Nove model, managers would be appointed by an elected committee representing the employees and would be responsible to that committee for basic policy.

---

* In such a society, observes Abram Bergson,

> managers of socialist plants and industries—the former responsible primarily for current operations, the latter for larger investments, especially introduction of new plants—are allowed similarly to determine autonomously inputs of factors and corresponding outputs. In the process, however, each is supposed to observe two rules: (1) to combine factors in such a way as to assure that at the prices established for such inputs any given output is produced at a minimum cost, and (2) to fix the scale of output of any commodity produced at a point where its marginal cost equals the corresponding price.[14]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

One main difference between socialized and cooperative enterprises is that in the former the state would have "a residual responsibility for their use or misuse, or for debts incurred," while a cooperative could freely dispose of its property or decide to go out of business (again, no doubt, within the bounds of social regulations). As for small-scale private enterprise,

> Presumably even the fanatical dogmatist would accept the existence of freelance writers, painters and dressmakers. My own list would be longer. Indeed, there should be no list. If any activity (not actually a "social bad" in itself) can be fruitfully and profitably undertaken by any individual, this sets up the presumption of its legitimacy. . . . So long as it is one individual, there would probably be no objection. . . . But there would be also the possibility of a private entrepreneur actually employing a few people, which makes him an "exploiter" insofar as he makes a profit out of their work. . . . Subject to limits, this should be allowed. . . .
>
> Subject to what limits? This could be decided democratically in the light of circumstances and experience. The limit could be on numbers employed, or on the value of capital assets, and could be varied by sector. One possible rule might be that above this limit there be a choice, either to convert into a cooperative or to become a socialized enterprise, with proper compensation for the original entrepreneur. . . . Be it noted that there is no provision for any class of capitalists; our small private entrepreneur *works*, even when employing a few others. There is then no *unearned* income, arising simply from *ownership* of capital or land.[16]

Scale as well as structure is important. The larger the enterprise, the more difficult self-management becomes and the more likely its bureaucratic deformation. But I do not see why even in subdivisions of Nove's "centralized state enterprises" there could not be nurtured at least a measure of workers' control regarding such matters as relations and pace of work, even if it is granted that on large overall decisions (how much oil should Britain extract from the North Sea?) there would have to be vertical decision-making subject to the check of the democratic polity.

In Nove's model the extent of central planning is, then, greater than in Selucky's. Major investment decisions; monitoring decentralized investments; administering such "naturally" central productive activities as electricity, oil, railways (today "public," actually private, utilities); setting ground rules for the autonomous economic sectors, "with reserve powers of intervention when things got out of balance" (today bailing out Chrysler, Penn Central); drafting long-term plans—all these, subject to decision and check by Parliament or Congress, would be the responsibility of central planning, thus entailing a greater concentration of economic power than many socialists, myself included, would prefer. But who can say with assurance? One encounters here a deep and inescapable tension between the technological-economic realm and the democratic-social arrangements of a socialist (and perhaps any modern) society.

In all such projected arrangements a crucial factor must surely be the morale and consciousness of the people. It isn't necessary, or desirable, to envisage a constant state of intense participation in public affairs, a noisy turmoil of activists, in order to recognize that the felt quality—as distinct from the mere economic workability—of such a society would depend on the fundamental concern of a sizable portion of the population. "No social system," Joseph Schumpeter has remarked, "can work that is based exclusively upon a network of free contracts . . . and in which everyone is supposed to be guided by nothing except his own (short-run) utilitarian ends."[17]

IF PUT TO THE TEST OF REALITY, such projections would surely require many changes. But the purpose of a model is not to "appropriate" the future, it is to indicate the nature of thought in the present. Nor need it be denied that such models contain within themselves a good many unresolved problems, tensions, perhaps even contradictions. They *should* contain them, for that is what lends a savor of reality. Let me now, in no particular order, consider a few of these problems:

- The Selucky and Nove models of ownership suffer from opposite difficulties. Selucky's lacks variety and flexibility in its proposals: why should there not be a range of democratic structures in economic life just as in political

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

life? Nove's model, by contrast, gives an uncomfortably strong place to "centralized state corporations." The ogre of bureaucratism rises with regard to both—in opposite ways, the one through rigidity and the other through concentration. In principle one would like to combine Selucky's stress upon worker self-management with Nove's stress upon varieties of property, but that may be asking for the best of all possible worlds, something actuality is chary of providing.

• Neither of our model-makers discusses sufficiently a major problem: the place of unions in a democratic socialist society. If the workers own an enterprise cooperatively or if they manage one democratically, is there still a need for unions? I would say yes, unambiguously. Insofar as we think of a socialist society as one with autonomous institutions and enterprises, this entails the likelihood and even desirability of democratically contained conflict. The weaker segments of the population should be able to protect themselves through organization. It's possible to foresee a situation in which a minority of workers in a self-managed enterprise believes it is being mistreated by the majority; that minority thereupon organizes itself into something very much like a union. In the "centralized state corporations" that Nove proposes as one mode of socialist ownership, there would surely be a need for strong unions to resist bureaucratic dictate. As for cooperatives, take the example of the Israeli kibbutzim. They function pretty much like cooperatives but also hire outside labor at wage rates; the people so hired may well feel they need a union to protect themselves against the benign or not-so-benign edicts of the cooperatives. So it could be in many areas of a socialist society. A pluralism of institutions signifies a plurality of interests, and these must express themselves openly through modulated conflict-and-cooperation.

• It would be hard, according to the economist Abram Bergson, to work out satisfactory criteria of success and reward in a socialist society for managers of the autonomous productive units. Pressed by the often clashing interests of the worker-employers and the central planning agencies of the state, managers might hesitate to take risks or use their initiative. They would need, also, to adjudicate between local interests and larger, more distant social goals, which might put them in a cross fire and cause them to yield to whichever side was the strongest. Incentives would have to be attached to their jobs, allowing them sufficient authority to display leadership while still being subject to the democratic check of worker-employers.

• Nor is it difficult to foresee conflicts among autonomous enterprises as they compete for the credits, subsidies, tax breaks, and contracts that are to be had from the state. Just as under capitalism competition tends to destroy competition, so it is by no means excluded that self-managed enterprises can form rings or cartels. This would have to be resisted, except perhaps in circumstances where economies of scale are *very* substantial. It might even be necessary to introduce a species of "socialist antitrust" legislation. For until the society reached an unforeseeable state of material abundance, a major source of conflict could well be that between general and partial interests, society as a whole and its regions, social groups and industrial units.

As Selucky says very sensibly, "Since no [complete] harmony of interests is possible at every level of society," there would have to be mediators to control the conflicting interests. "To regulate the conflicts, two mediators are necessary: the market mechanism for economics and the multiparty system for politics."[18]

• Employment and income policies could also bring serious difficulties—for instance, coping with tendencies toward local monopolizing of jobs where enterprise profits are high; working out income policies that might arouse opposition from unions but could be seen as justifiable for the common good; finding ways to help workers whom technological changes in a given industry or enterprise have rendered superfluous; deciding upon—or how to decide upon—appropriate surpluses for capital investments and new technologies as against the "natural" inclination of self-managed communities to reap immediate rewards, and so on. For that matter, it is foolhardy to suppose that unem-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ployment might not be a problem in a democratic socialist society: all one can reasonably expect is a readiness to deal with it quickly.

• Another complex of problems worth at least pointing to concerns how, when, and whether the state should intervene if a self-managed enterprise is failing. For some would fail, the operation of even a regulated market under socialism having certain parallels to its operation under capitalism.

• Many such problems constitute disadvantages probably inseparable from the advantages of a regulated market, and they seem to reinforce the traditional critiques, both Marxist and romantic, of the market. That the market subjects the human encounter to the fetishism of commodities, signifying that men are not free from the rule of impersonal exchange and wage labor, is true. But unless we can suppose an implausible cornucopia of goods and services, we had better accept the idea of a regulated market as necessary under a feasible democratic socialism.

A socially controlled market would also have some attractive features. The argument against capitalism first made by R. H. Tawney still holds—not that it's bad if people take some risks but that in a society where a few have much and most have little or nothing, the majority doesn't enjoy the privilege of taking risks. Risk, thought Tawney, is "bracing if it is voluntarily undertaken," and in a cooperative commonwealth self-managed enterprises and producers' cooperatives could take socially useful risks that would bring into play their energies and minds.

Still, the market has drawbacks traditionally noted by the left, and one possible way of getting past some of these, as also perhaps moving a bit closer to Marx's vision of "free associated producers," is a modest increase in society's provision of free goods. Some commodities could be produced in such abundance and at so small a cost, it would be economical to dispose of them at zero price rather than incur the overhead costs of charging for them. Even today water, some health, and many educational services are free, which in actuality means carrying them as a shared or social cost. In a cooperative commonwealth, such provision might be extended to milk and perhaps even to bread. Would people take more than they need, would there be waste at first? Probably; yet that might not be as wasteful as many of the practices we simply take for granted in a capitalist society. And as free access to a modest number of basic goods would become customary, misuse of the privilege would probably decrease. Nevertheless, in a market socialism such free provision could only be marginal.

• All these problems are instances of a larger problem often cited by conservatives for whom socialism is anathema, as the market is for doctrinal Marxists. It is possible that the autonomous enterprises might repeat some of the socially undesirable behavior with which we are familiar in corporate capitalism, functioning as "socialist corporate" units in quite as selfish a spirit as present-day corporations are known to do. When doctrinaire leftists (or rightists, for that matter) point to possible abuses in a market socialism, they are almost always pointing to risks present in *any* democratic society. Mistakes and abuses are always with us; this is a condition of freedom and can be eliminated only by eliminating freedom itself.

What would be needed in a democratic socialist society (as today in a democratic capitalist society) is some version of the welfare state. Through electoral decisions, compromises and bargaining, it could adjudicate among conflicting parts of the population, setting rules for the operation of the market while protecting both the norms of the society and the rights of its citizens.

VI

Finally, the socialist aspiration has less to do with modes of property ownership than with qualities of social life. That is why the case for socialism rests not just on its proposed reduction of inequities in wealth and power, but on its wish to democratize economic practice. The two values—equality and freedom—are sometimes, of course, in tension, but when regarded in a spirit of generosity and humaneness, they flourish together, as they seem to have flour-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ished, partly, during the early days of the American republic.

The egalitarian ideal has been very strong in socialist thought and tradition. It should be. There is something morally repulsive in the maldistribution of wealth and income in a country like the United States. And not only is this state of affairs morally repulsive, it is socially unjust, a major barrier to the genuine realization of the democratic idea. Now, any proposal can be pushed too far, turning into a vicious parody of itself. An egalitarianism enforced by authoritarian decree—what's called in Eastern Europe "barracks egalitarianism"—is utterly alien to the socialist idea. Our vision of egalitarianism implies a steady, perhaps slow and surely gradual rectification of inequities through education, legislation, and popular assent. It aims not for some absurd version of total equality (whatever that might mean) but rather for a progress toward the fair sharing of socioeconomic goods and political power that would allow each person to fulfill his or her potentialities.

One precondition is both political and economic democracy, with the latter signifying the replacement, insofar as possible, of "vertical" hierarchical structures by "horizontal" egalitarian ones. Workers' control, self-management by those who work in an enterprise—some such concept is crucial to the socialist hope. One needn't be a fanatic and set up standards so impossibly high, they will fall of their own weight. In the end socialists have no choice but to accept the wager—either a genuine, if imperfect, economic democracy is realizable or the entire socialist enterprise must be relegated to historical fantasy.

A classic case for workers' control appears in John Stuart Mill's *The Principles of Political Economy*:

> The form of association . . . which, if mankind continues to improve, must be expected in the end to predominate, is not that which can exist between a capitalist as chief, and workpeople without a voice in the management, but the association of the laborers themselves on terms of equality, collectively owning the capital with which they carry on their operations, and working under managers elected and removable by themselves.[19]

No longer tolerating their reduction to mere factors of production, workers would learn through experience to demand their rights as free, autonomous men and women. They would form cooperatives. They would acquire some of the skills of management (those arcane mysteries, it's sometimes said, which must forever remain beyond the reach of the lowly). And in time there could be a trade-off between some of the efficiencies allegedly brought about by authoritarian forms of organization and the growing creativity of cooperative production.

Too often in recent socialist literature the idea, sometimes merely the slogan, of workers' control has remained gloriously vague. What does it mean precisely? That decisions regarding production, prices, wages, and investment in a giant enterprise like a "socialist GM" would be made by the assembled workers or even their representatives? And if so, how would it be possible to avoid the linked plagues of bureaucratism, demagogic manipulation, clique maneuverings, endless filibustering, ignorant narrowness, cronyism in elections, and a selfish resistance to the larger needs of society?

One frequent argument against self-management proposals is that their advocates tend to minimize the sheer complexity of modern enterprise. Lay people (workers) would have difficulty in securing relevant information from managers; they would often be unable to grasp the technical aspects of the information they got; and they would lack the time needed to reflect upon what they did grasp in order to arrive at coherent plans. There is of course some truth to this argument, though it largely proceeds on the assumption that workers in a better society will remain quite as workers are today. But there is reason to expect that with higher levels of education and a greater provision for time, leisure, and training within the organized work community, some of these problems could be overcome. Lethargy isn't a universal constant; it is a socially conditioned phenomenon open to change. "Full" participation in managerial activities might, in some situations, be a chimera; but there surely could be a large measure of selective control by workers even in giant enterprises, with technicalities left to managers and large policy issues decided through democratic mechanisms.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A somewhat different problem is raised in a recent study by Allen Graubard, who sees workers' control, narrowly conceived, as clashing with public rights. A large corporation —

> is a national resource. . . . The same argument against private control of the founder-owner or by the current corporate owner works . . . against private control by the community of employees. The authority for major decisions of the enterprise should rest in the larger public, the democratic polity.[20]

This criticism can best be regarded as a warning against *exclusive* control of major enterprises by the workers within it—though even that should not preclude a good measure of self-management with regard to intraplant arrangements. About such matters it would be foolish to be dogmatic; far better to recognize a multiplicity of interests and outlooks, with the certainty that, if ventures in self-management are undertaken, they will be subject to many difficulties.

The practical impediments to workers' self-management that both sophisticated organization theorists and "the man in the street" detect are often real enough—but are the consequent objections very much more cogent than similar arguments once used against the feasibility of political democracy? An excrescence of bureaucratism might indeed flourish on the structure of self-management. Who in the 20th century can deny that possibility (or *any* possibility)? Here everything depends on conscious effort, the vigilance that had better be eternal—quite as with regard to political democracy. And there is much cogency in an argument advanced by George Lichtheim that

> A future advance will probably have to start from a concept of technical education which envisages it not simply as a means of improving efficiency, but as a link between the worker and the planner. . . . For the worker technology holds the most direct access to science and everything that lies beyond it. But technical education without responsible participation soon loses its spur. . . . For [socialists], its significance . . . lies in the fact that it arises spontaneously out of the modern process of work, while at the same time it enables the worker to develop his individuality.[21]

In practice self-management would sometimes thrive, sometimes stumble, but always be marked, like all human enterprises, by imperfections. There is one argument, however, against self-management that seems to me peculiarly insidious: it is offered, as you might expect, by ex-radicals, and its main thrust is that workers "show little interest" in the idea.

In certain empirical respects, this is not even true. Through their unions, workers have often fought very hard for such noneconomic rights as grievance mechanisms and a proper work atmosphere. These inroads on traditional "management prerogatives" often constitute modest beginnings of economic democracy, whether or not those who make the inroads so conceptualize them. Still, for the sake of the argument, let us grant the conservative claim that workers today "show little interest" in self-management proposals. To stop there would be to acquiesce supinely in "the given." For this argument against self-management is essentially an extension of a larger skepticism about democratic politics. How often have we not heard that most people care more about their bellies than their freedoms? Or that in the United States millions of citizens don't even bother to vote? Notions of self-management, our conservatives tell us, are mere futile efforts by small groups of intellectuals to "impose their fantasies" upon ordinary people who seem quite content to allow the corporations to determine their work lives.

Few of us are born passionate democrats. The values of freedom have to be learned. Centuries passed before masses of men came to feel that democracy is a necessity of life. All the while it was a not-very-large company of intellectuals who sought to "impose their fantasies" about democracy upon ordinary people. Even today, who can say that this persuasion has taken deep enough root?

It may be a long time before the value of democratic norms is secured in socioeconomic life. An independent Yugoslav writer, Branko Horvat, reports that in his country "inherited authoritarian attitudes are so deeply ingrained that they are unconsciously carried into self-management."[22] Could it be otherwise—especially in a country with little experience in political democracy, before or after Tito?

Nothing is ordained. Socialism, self-manage-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment, economic democracy are options, sometimes brighter, sometimes dimmer. The realization of the socialist hope depends on the growth of consciousness, a finer grasp of the possibilities of citizenship and comradeship than now prevails. Times change. We will emerge from our present slough of small-spirited conservative acquiescence and live again by more generous aspirations. The idea of self-management could then take a somewhat more prominent place on the agenda of public discourse—kept alive by "unrealistic intellectuals," "visionary socialists."

VII

Amid such turnings of political thought, a harsh question intrudes itself: Does the socialist idea, even if rendered more sophisticated than in the past, still survive as a significant option?

Historical energy and idealism cannot be supplied on demand. Once an idea becomes contaminated or a generation exhausted, it takes a long time before new energies can be summoned, if summoned at all. Whether socialism can be revived as a living idea—which is something different from the mere survival of European social democratic parties—is by now very much a question. So too is the possibility, or hope, that it may serve as a bridge toward a radical new humanism.

In any case, socialists remain. They engage themselves with the needs of the moment, struggling for betterment in matters large and small, reforms major and modest: they do not sit and wait for the millennium. And they continue also to grapple with fragments of a tradition. This intellectual effort, it must be admitted, can handicap them politically. Not many people became socialists because they were persuaded of the correctness of Marxist economics or supposed the movement served their "class interests." They became socialists because they were moved by the call to brotherhood and sisterhood; because the world seemed aglow with the vision of a time in which humanity might live in justice and peace. Whatever we may now claim for a refurbished socialism, we can hardly claim that it satisfies the emotions as once the early movement did.

If it is true that utopian-apocalyptic expectations are indispensable for a movement advocating major social change, then democratic socialists are in deeper trouble than even they recognize. For in politics, as elsewhere, choices must be made. You cannot opt for the rhythms of a democratic politics and still expect it to yield the pathos and excitement of revolutionary movements. Our hope must be that there are other kinds of fervor—quieter, less melodramatic, morally stronger—which a democratic reformist politics can evoke.

I have been speaking about the problem of socialism as if it were self-sufficient and self-referential; but that is no more than a useful analytic device, an abstraction from the real world in which the fate of socialism must be bound up with the fate of capitalism. We cannot be certain. The recovery of Western capitalism during the several decades after the Second World War has come to a halt; there is clearly in the West a serious crisis regarding such problems as unemployment, technological change, relations with the underdeveloped world. And how well democratic capitalism will be able to deal with these problems is very much a question.

Our problem may be restated as that of utopianism—does the utopian vision still have value for us?

The "utopia" imposed through force and terror by a self-chosen vanguard is hell. The utopia of a "withering away of the state" is a fantasy gone stale. But there remains a utopian outlook that relates immediate objectives to ultimate goals, and it is to this that socialists cling. As Leszek Kolakowski has written:

> . . . goals now unattainable will never be reached unless they are articulated when they are still unattainable. . . . The existence of a utopia as a utopia is the necessary prerequisite for its eventually ceasing to be a utopia.[23]

"Very nice," a friendly voice interjects; "but socialism—has not that name been soiled in the pillagings of our century? Might it not be better for a movement to shake itself clear of all the old confusions, defeats, betrayals?"

I can well imagine that a movement in America might choose to drop the socialist

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

label: who needs, once again, to explain that we do *not* want the kinds of society that exist in Russia and China, Poland and Cuba? But at least with regard to America we continue to speak of small groups trying to keep alive a tradition. Suppose, indeed, we were to conclude that the socialist label creates more trouble than it's worth: we would then have to cast about for a new vocabulary, something not to be won through fiat. How much would actually change if our words were to change? If, say, we ceased calling ourselves socialists and instead announced that henceforth we are to be known as—what? "economic democrats" or "democratic radicals"? The substance of our problems would remain, the weight of this century's burdens still press upon us. We would still regard capitalism as an unjust society, still find its inequities intolerable, still be repelled by its ethic of greed, and still be trying to sketch the outlines of a better society.

Isaiah Berlin has written that liberalism is "a notoriously exposed, dangerous, and ungrateful position." I would borrow his words for democratic socialism, which is not quite the same as but, in my sense of things, has a kinship with his liberalism.

For those socialists who have experienced in their bones the meaning of our century, the time has not yet come, I believe, to cast off its burdens. It may come. Meanwhile, we hope to serve as a link to those friends of tomorrow who will have so completely absorbed the lessons of our age, they will not need to rehearse them. Whatever the fate of socialism, the yearning for a better mode of life, which found expression in its thought and its struggle, will reappear. Of that I am certain.

Notes

[1] Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1949, paperback), p. 96.

[2] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (London, 1942 edition), p. 26.

[3] Paul Ricoeur, "Power and the State," in Irving Howe, ed., *Essential Works of Socialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 736.

[4] Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975, paperback), p. 54.

[5] Stuart Hampshire, "Epilogue," in Leszek Kolakowski and Stuart Hampshire, eds., *The Socialist Idea* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), p. 249.

[6] Karl Kautsky, "The Commonwealth of the Future," in Howe, ed., *Essential Works of Socialism*, p. 169.

[7] Morris Hillquit, quoted in William English Walling, *Progressivism and After* (New York: Macmillan, 1914), pp. 169-70.

[8] Harold Orlans, "Democracy and Social Planning," *Dissent*, Spring 1954, p. 194.

[9] Leszek Kolakowski, "Introduction," in Kolakowski and Hampshire, eds., *The Socialist Idea*, p. 15.

[10] Michael Harrington, "What Socialists Would Do in America—If They Could," in Irving Howe, ed., *Twenty-Five Years of Dissent: An American Tradition* (New York: Methuen, 1979), p. 23.

[11] Alec Nove, *The Economics of Feasible Socialism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 174.

[12] Radoslav Selucký, *Marxism, Socialism, Freedom* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), p. 36.

[13] Ibid., pp. 179-80.

[14] Abram Bergson, "Market Socialism Revisited," *Journal of Political Economy*, October 1967, p. 656.

[15] Nove, p. 200.

[16] Nove, p. 206–207.

[17] Quoted in Nove, p. 204.

[18] Selucký, p. 185.

[19] John Stuart Mill, *The Principles of Political Economy*.

[20] Allen Graubard, "Ideas of Economic Democracy," *Dissent*, Fall 1984, p. 421.

[21] George Lichtheim, "Collectivism Reconsidered," in Howe, ed., *Essential Works of Socialism*, p. 757.

[22] Branko Horvat, *The Political Economy of Socialism* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1983), p. 255.

[23] Leszek Kolakowski, "The Concept of the Left," in Howe, ed., *Essential Works of Socialism*, p. 686. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS

More on "Politics and the Battered Woman"

I

Editors:

Of all the ways that one might contribute to public discussion on violence against women, Jean Bethke Elshtain's review in the Winter 1985 *Dissent* of Susan Schechter's book, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*, is most peculiar. Elshtain misrepresents the prevalence of wife-beating by associating it solely with exceptional social circumstances.

"We know that the phenomenon of the battered woman is not a pregiven of social life," Elshtain asserts. Obviously, the nature of violence against women varies among different societies, and the prevalence of wife-beating may change over different historical periods; but can one really deny the remarkable continuity of this form of violence throughout much of Eastern and Western civilization? "We are not looking at an intrinsic feature of family life," Elshtain concludes at one point. She seems to want to marginalize wife-beating, to allege that it occurs "*only*" under circumstances of social isolation. This is drastically overstated. The research on wife-beating does not support such a safe, stereotypic compartmentalization, out of the mainstream of what is "intrinsic" to family life. On the contrary, most researchers claim that violence against wives is more common than is generally acknowledged. Let us not forget that wife-beating was *legal* in the United States up until the 1870s; was this legal entitlement to beat women reserved only for men in isolated or unstable settings?

The issue of murder between husbands and wives is another example of Elshtain's misrepresentation. Here she criticizes Schechter for employing self-defense as an explanation for why wife-husband homicide occurs nearly as frequently as husband-wife homicide. Yet there are numerous studies of this phenomenon, widely available, whose findings point consistently to Schechter's explanation: Wives who kill their husbands are often battered women who act in self-defense.

Elshtain also adopts a puzzling stance on the issue of counseling for wife-beaters. She portrays such counseling as an example of using science "to manipulate and control our 'instincts' in the interest of social amity." Quoting Hannah Arendt, she states that "our capacity for rage and violence is part of a complex repertoire of '*human* emotions, and to cure man of them would mean nothing less than to dehumanize or emasculate him.' " Can Elshtain seriously characterize wife-beating as instinctual behavior? And does she really see counseling for batterers as dehumanizing or emasculating?

To reduce the complexity of wife-battering to "instincts"—to primitive rage, or impulsivity, or an anger-control problem, as some popular analyses would have it—is to deny that the batterer acts willfully, that the violence is intentional and goal-oriented. And to suggest, as Elshtain does, that Schechter is advocating "behavior modification" for batterers is inaccurate. As a researcher on wife-beating and one who is involved in counseling batterers, I am aware of no program that uses "behavior modification" as a technique, in the sense of Skinnerian operant conditioning. To characterize *all* counseling and therapy as "behavior modification," which may be Elshtain's real point, is grossly misleading.

Currently, most counseling for wife-beaters is voluntary; men enter and drop out of the program at their own initiative. Even the court-mandated programs with which I am familiar screen potential participants in order to select those who seem most willing to take the group-counseling process seriously. What is so dehumanizing about holding batterers responsible for their violence? What is so emasculating about challenging, in a weekly group setting, batterers' justifications for their actions? If there is now an abuse with counseling, it is that it is used as a moral sop by a society that refuses to treat wife-beating as a crime. . . .

The most methodological, rigorous study of rape in the United States is Diana E. H. Russell's *Rape in Marriage* (New York: Macmillan, 1982; I am quoting data from pp. 57 and 64). Drawing from a random sample of 930 women, Russell found that 44 percent reported at least one completed or attempted rape. Of the 644 who had ever been married, 14 percent reported at least one rape or attempted rape by their husbands. Russell's figures are between 7 and 13 times higher than official federal figures (depending on whether one compares them with National Crime Survey or Uniform Crime Report data). This study substantiates what feminists have been saying all along about the prevalence of violence against women, something that Elshtain has refused to accept.

Susan Schechter's book presents that rare bridge between grass-roots political activism and social theory. Far from providing universal answers, as Elshtain charges, Schechter lays out questions that demand further attention. She invites the reader to explore the many issues raised by a decade of impressive feminist organizing. Elshtain's response is to continue to deny the centrality of violence to the private lives of women. I only hope that others will accept Schechter's challenge and will confront the issue of violence against women more responsibly.

James Ptacek
Cambridge, Mass.

II

Editors:

"Politics and the Battered Woman," Jean Bethke Elshtain's review of Susan Schechter's book *Women and Male Violence*, systematically distorts Schechter's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

analysis of male violence against women. Schechter posits male violence as a strategy to maintain patriarchy. Elshtain, resonating to the New Right in her views of the family, sees male violence against women as a desperate response to the condition of the crumbling and privatized family system. . . .

Elshtain asserts four concerns that reflect her commitment to idealized "stable" homes as the answer to male violence:

(1) ". . . violence may well be a major symptom of familial breakups at a time of widespread social dislocation rather than a constant feature of secure relationships in stable settings."

(2) ". . . [battering] constitutes . . . not an intrinsic feature of family life but . . . a likely or possible outcome of family privatization given the breakdown of social constraints and supports for families."

(3) ". . . There is a built-in uncertainty, by definition, in homosexual liaisons. The usual role expectations and unconsciously operating 'checks and balances,' the playing off of 'rights' and 'prerogatives' cannot be so easily wheeied into place. In a chilling way, rage that erupts into violence may aim for clarity on this question."

(4) ". . . Schechter slides past the problem of female violence by asserting that many 'women have no alternative but to kill a spouse' in self-defense. One senses an evasion here."

The persistence and prevalence of male-initiated intimate violence suggests that such abuse is far more commonplace than Elshtain is willing to admit. There is a huge discrepancy between male- vs. female-initiated violence, repeated violence, and inflicted pain, injury, and murder.

If domestic violence were the result of *unstable* relationships, and if patriarchy were an irrelevant social condition or an excuse generated by feminists to justify their anger, why, in relationships that seem "stable" by all traditional definitions and in which women are desperately dependent on men economically and emotionally, does violence occur at such extraordinary rates? Why do we find a greater incidence of male violence when women are reclaiming some power, for instance, through pregnancy, or return to work or school? Why would we not find an increase of women initiating violence against men as marriages and heterosexual relations near an end?

Elshtain's notion that violence is an anomalous response to domestic instability resonates to a dangerous position of the New Right. If the problem is one of the destabilized family, then make these families more stable! Social intervention designed to strengthen the family at the expense of its least powerful members—women and children—is a sacrifice we have made in this culture far too long.

Schechter's analysis demands that "family privacy" and "family stability" be recognized as potentially deadly concerns for women and children. From the New Right and profamily advocates on the left, attempts to further privatize family violence and strengthen families in which women and children are at risk reflect an antiwoman and life-threatening public policy.

People who share households need social supports such as public child care, public assistance, community-based care for the elderly, socialized health care, and quality schools. But a nurturing social context must support individuals who wish to leave oppressive arrangements as well as those who wish to stay. Schechter's book demonstrates the battered women's movement as a social movement designed to accomplish both ends—to empower women who opt to leave, and to support even those who stay and endure male violence.

MICHELLE FINE
Philadelphia, Pa. □

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN Replies

James Ptacek employs a common rhetorical device, used when the aim is not so much to challenge the arguments of another as to call into question her political good faith. He picks out pieces of my essay and draws conclusions from these fragments that I do not draw.

For example: (1) He claims that I seem "to want to . . . allege" that wife-beating occurs "only" under circumstances of social isolation. But I do not want to allege anything of the sort. What I said, quite straightforwardly, was that wife-beating is not a universal pregiven of family life, first, and second, that particular constellations of social circumstance put some relations at far greater risk than others. He also ignores the fact that much "wife"-beating takes place among unmarried couples. This reality compels us to think about the fact that marriage makes a relationship more public, hence more accountable.

(2) I nowhere criticize Susan Schechter for the self-defense argument made by some women in cases of spouse murder. But when Schechter says that women "have no alternative but to kill a spouse in self-defense," she slides past many important questions concerning personal violence—by whom, when, under what circumstances—preferring to stick with a rigid male/female bifurcation. She fails to acknowledge that equalization of rates of interpersonal violence when weapons are used challenges her theory of *why* violence and *who* is violent.

(3) The question of treatment for offenders is complex. Counseling is no doubt helpful and important for a whole range of problems. But the contested issue is the nature of court-"mandated counseling," under whose terms, with what therapeutic imprimatur, to what explicit or implicit ends. Ptacek goes on to misunderstand and twist Arendt's argument completely. Arendt is not talking about "instincts"—indeed, she rejects the whole notion of an instinct-driven creature where hu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

man beings are concerned. Rather, she is concerned that in our rush to eliminate violent behavior we may also damage our capacity for rage at injustice.

Paradoxically, when Ptacek argues against Arendt's defense of righteous rage, he undercuts his own stated support of a woman's right to self-defense up to and including the murder of a violent spouse. For Arendt's use of the term "man" is generic. (When she wrote *On Violence* in 1969, we had not yet entered the era of "inclusive language.")

The most interesting portion of Michelle Fine's letter occurs in her second sentence. She claims that I am "resonating to the New Right" in my views on the family and violence, thus casting an ideological pall over my argument from the outset. Presumably, "resonating" to the New Right means one embraces the agenda of the New Right, or tries to usurp their turf using their polemics, or in some other way passes oneself off as a left-wing sheep when one is really a right-wing wolf. Having been thus politically relocated, it scarcely matters what one in fact has said.

Why is it necessary to resort to such tedious tactics? Whose interests are served when feminists and the left cannot give one another space for honest disagreements and discussion about major social problems?

One brief, final note: with Fine I am all for nurturing social contexts. But thinking about such contexts immediately raises important questions concerning welfarism, state bureaucracies, care coupled with control, all those issues Fine ignores but I raise. And I raise them in part because Schechter tells the story of how the nurturing contexts offered by battered women's shelters often turned into something else once they became bureaucratized as state agencies entered in full force. Shouldn't this be the ground of debate rather than pitching those with whom one disagrees into the arms of Phyllis Schlafly? □

To Our Contributors

- When sending manuscripts, please make sure that you do not send your only copy.

- And please also be sure to enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. □

Pro-Elshtain

Editors:

I applaud the vigorous exchange between Elshtain and Schechter. . . . I am familiar with the writings of Elshtain, and am surprised that anyone would describe her as antifeminist, arrogant, accuse her of missing relevant points, or of trying "to discredit a political perspective by appearing to adhere to it." Quite the contrary. Elshtain is thorough and rigorous; her knowledge (and understanding) of political theory, its relation to feminist political theory in particular, and the implications for thought and action, makes a significant contribution to the field of political inquiry. I put her up there with John Schaar and Sheldon Wolin, a stature all the more pleasing as Elshtain's is a woman's voice in a field of thought long dominated by men.

In the best tradition of Hannah Arendt, Elshtain questions and examines. Schechter should read Arendt on the meanings of speech, action, thought, and the public world. Then, rather than feel she was mercilessly attacked, she would appreciate Elshtain's criticisms, view Elshtain as one who provokes, incites one to think and to challenge one's own presumptions. One really must avoid to be what Rabelais feared, the *agelaste*, a person who does not laugh, who is convinced that the Truth is obvious and that all people think the same thing.

Milan Kundera's speech upon receiving a literary prize (the translation was printed in the *New York Review of Books*, June 13, 1985) observed that " . . . it is precisely in losing the certainty of truth and the unanimous agreement of others that man becomes an individual." I further add Arendt's observations on what it means to be a citizen and the importance of the public realm: the significance of being seen and heard by others comes from the fact that we all see and hear from a different position in life, "this is the meaning of public life . . . "; the public realm, the polis, is the arena for speech and action. Herein lies the value of that lively interchange between Elshtain and Schechter.

As Elshtain so eloquently wrote (in *Public Man, Private Woman*), if speech is the way we come to know ourselves, reveal ourselves to others, express our identities, then to deny or repress them closes possibilities for that "transformative political discourse." (I urge Schechter to read Chapter Six of this book.) Contrary to what Schechter may think, she and Elshtain do share a vision.

MARIA KALLAI
San Diego, California

- *This discussion is now concluded.* — EDS. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

continued from p. 492

of Cairo sets before us is one conceived primarily in terms of the problem of distortion. Cecelia sees what she wants through the imaginary world of film, but she sees it only indirectly, through a maze of false starts and illusory figures. She is bound on that account to misunderstand herself and her predicament in the long run. Mistaking the real for the illusory, she will always fall for Gil Shepard, and never get away from Monk. Because they represent her desires in distorted form, the movies both tell Cecelia what she wants and forever prevent her from possessing it.

Is there an imaginary life without illusion, without distortion? Is illusion, in other words, the creation of a certain form of society, as Marx thought? Woody Allen does not say. He focuses instead on the final arc of the particular sort of distortion that goes on in film. When Cecelia learns of Gil's deceit, she does not return immediately to Monk, though we understand, as she does, that this is now inevitable. Instead, she enters the theater, where a new and presumably less troubling film is just under way. Cecelia sits distracted, unable to grasp completely what has happened, but surely aware of the magnitude of her self-deception. She looks beaten and desperate. But then Fred Astaire begins to sing and to waltz Ginger Rogers across the floor. Cecelia raises her head and watches. Ever so slowly, her face softens. The same glow returns to her eyes, and her mouth lifts in a rapturous smile. She is once again enthralled and unmistakably, if only momentarily, happy. □

continued from p. 508

scribed almost entirely from the perspective of the individual member. There is hardly any effort to portray the internal decision-making procedures, the processes by which participants attempt to maintain their commitment, and the formidable obstacles and tensions they must surmount. Communities that have had relatively lengthy existences such as Sojourners in Washington, D.C., and Koinonia in Georgia are not mentioned at all. In these respects, the method of analysis employed by the authors unfortunately duplicates the conditions of the culture they find so disturbing.

Equally symptomatic are the political recommendations in the final chapters. Few people would disagree with the assertion that it is important to reappropriate cultural traditions in order to respond to present needs. But the authors have not succeeded in making this second language any more specific than the men and women who are described by them as being vague in expressing such sentiments. How should a movement based on biblical and republican principles try to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor? What specific lessons does the civil rights movement have for us today? What will be the standards of judgment about the good life? How do we distinguish between the New Right's version of biblical politics and a more genuine version?

The political recommendations presented in *Habits of the Heart* are ultimately enveloped in an atmosphere of unreality, largely because they are described in terms of changing language, reconceptualizing practices, and restoring old meanings. At times one has the feeling that the authors secretly believe that most social problems can be resolved through the rectification of names. The closest they get to the stuff of actual politics is to endorse the formation of a new social movement that will be "neither liberal nor conservative" and truly committed to transforming American society. But they do not bother to mention from where the movement would emerge, who would comprise it, and what connections it would have to those people and movements that are currently defined as liberal or conservative.

These criticisms might not be that crucial if *Habits of the Heart* were the first book—or even the second, third, or fourth—to detail the problems of contemporary individualism. But it is not. By now, it is certainly time for those who find fault with an untrammeled individualism to be either more specific in their recommendations or more attentive to the ongoing experiments of ordinary men and women in dealing with their dissatisfactions. If not, such books will soon become as barren as the consumer culture they deplore. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ROBERT L. HEILBRONER

"One of the two or three most perceptive, original, and lucid social analysts in America. His new book is wonderfully provocative, pleasurably readable, and socially important."—Irving Howe

The Nature and Logic of Capitalism

In search of an answer to the demanding question *What is capitalism?*, Professor Heilbroner takes us on a far-ranging exploration to the unconscious levels of the human psyche and the roots of domination and submission; to the organization of primitive society and the origins of wealth; to the sources of profit and the conception of a "regime" of capital; to the interplay of relatively slow-changing institutions and the powerful force of the accumulation of wealth. In this powerful and important book the ideas of Adam Smith and Karl Marx, as well as Freud and modern anthropologists, are considered, enabling us to understand capitalism in our time, its possibilities and limits. "Lucid and profound."—William H. McNeill. $15.95

STEPHEN F. COHEN

Sovieticus

American Perceptions and Soviet Realities

"This book is indispensable in my judgment to a clear understanding of the present day Soviet behavior and the American relationship...*Sovieticus* is the most balanced and perceptive commentary on the Soviet Union that I have read in a long time."—George McGovern. $12.95

Now at all bookstores

Norton

W. W. Norton & Co. 500 Fifth Avenue New York 10110

dissent

521 Fifth Avenue New York, N.Y. 10017

13938 10/31/86
PETER HAVAS
1634 HAMPTON RD
ABINGTON PA 19001

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED